December 15, 2002
Department of Veterans Affairs

THE MID-POINT REPORT ON THE STRESS AND AGGRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE PROJECT

Stress & Aggression In the Workplace

A Collaborative Action Research Project

PILOT SITES

VA Regional Office – Chicago
VA Regional Office – Des Moines
VA Regional Office – Milwaukee
VA Regional Office – Phoenix
VA Regional Office – St. Paul
VA Medical and Regional Office Center – Fargo
VA Health Care System – Black Hills
VA Medical Center – Minneapolis
VA Medical And Regional Office Center – Sioux Falls
VA Medical Center - St. Cloud
VA National Cemetery – Houston

COMPARISON SITES

VA Regional Office - Atlanta
VA Regional Office - Detroit
VA Regional Office - Louisville
VA Regional Office - Montgomery
VA Regional Office - Pittsburgh
VA Regional Office - Wilmington
VA Regional Office - White River Junction
VA Medical Center - Boise
VA Medical Center - Coatesville
VA Medical Center - Manchester
VA Medical Center - Portland
VA Spokane Medical Center - Spokane
VA Medical Center - Togus
VA National Cemetery - Massachusetts
VA National Cemetery - San Joaquin Valley

PROJECT TEAM NETWORK

VA Office of Occupational Safety and Health - James Scaringi
Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Director, Network 23 - Robert Petzel
Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), New York Regional Office - Rita Kowalski
VA Office of Resolution Management - Odessa Johnson
VHA HRM Group - Daniel Kowalski
Teachers College, Columbia University - Lyle Yorks
Wayne State University - Loraleigh Keashly
State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz - Joel Neuman
Fairleigh Dickinson University - Joel Harmon
VHA, Chicago Health Care System - Michelle Blakely
VHA Employee Education System (EES) Network 23 - Bridget Cannon
National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Field Operations - Robert Kline
VHA VISN 23 Education Office - Gene Mickelson
VBA, Office of Human Resources Management - Jennifer Long
VA Office of Human Resources Management - Ellen Kollar
National VA Council American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) - Oscar Williams
National VA Council AFGE - Anthony McCray
National VA Council AFGE - Patrick Russell
VBA, AFGE - Barbara Cook

"How we treat each other affects the results that we achieve."

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THE MID-POINT REPORT ON THE WORKPLACE STRESS AND AGGRESSION PROJECT

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

At the Department of Veterans Affairs, we exist to provide care and safe, efficient service to veterans. What we often forget to think about is how our behavior and our interactions with each other affect our work. The Workplace Stress and Aggression Project provides an opportunity to do just that.

The Project has two objectives:

1. It will help us understand how stress and aggressive behaviors can lead to the disruption of work and, in some rare cases, even to violent acts.

2. With this understanding, we will then be able to develop workplace practices and systems that will ease workplace tensions, improve performance and allow us to more effectively serve veterans.

The Four Questions the Project Will Answer

- How does workplace aggression and stress affect employee satisfaction?
- How does workforce stress and aggression affect the quality and costs of services in VA?
- How does workplace stress and aggression affect the veterans' satisfaction?
- How does our action inquiry and action review process encourage and bring about learning in VA?

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT

The Workplace Stress and Aggression Project involves an active and growing network both within and outside VA. Its basic structure consists of a Project Team and eleven Action Teams. (Appendix A lists the team members.)

Project Team

Role: *The Project Team manages and directs the project through such things as establishing timetables, identifying critical events, monitoring progress, evaluating and assessing accomplishments, sharing practices and results and providing the teams with support.*

The Project Team consists of representatives drawn from across VA, from the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and from four universities. Project Team Members come from the Department level, from all three administrations, and from the field and central office. In addition, the American Federation of Government Employees has four officers drawn from across AFGE who are part of the Project Team. The four universities involved in the project are Fairleigh Dickinson University, Wayne State University, State University of New York at New Paltz and Teachers College at Columbia University.

Action Teams

THE ACTION TEAMS *are actively participating in the project. They have briefed employees on the project and the survey, asked questions about data, used inquiry and the learning practices, and developed and helped implement interventions. Both management and the union jointly selected the team members, representing a cross section of their facilities. The selection criteria included such things as having credibility with employees and leadership, an action-orientation, good communication skills and a commitment to learning. (See page   for a description of the process used.)*

The Action Teams are located at 11 facilities in the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Comparison Sites

THE COMPARISON SITES are the facilities that only took the survey. While they did get the survey's results, they are not participating in the other aspects of the project. The comparison sites will help the project evaluate the impact of the interventions at the pilot sites.

There are 15 comparison sites located in the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

The Workplace Stress and Aggression Project is learning about:

- The Context in which Change and Stress is Taking Place in VA

- Characteristics of Stress and Aggression within VA

- How Work Climate, Stress and Aggression, Employee Satisfaction and Business Results Link Together in VA

- How Local Action Teams Act Upon Data and How They Develop, Identify and Implement Interventions

- How the Project Team and the Action Teams Are Learning as They Move through the Project

At what we can consider the project's midpoint, we have collected data which provide us with a clearer picture of what we know and what we think we now know about stress and aggression in VA and its relationship to work climate, employee satisfaction and business results.

Appendix B contains a chronology of the project.

OUR QUESTIONS

In this report, we present data that we have gathered using a variety of methods and approaches. While we now know more about stress, aggression and learning, we also have found we have generated more questions about what we don't know. We have included some of these questions to help generate new discussions, new inquiries, and new learning and knowledge.

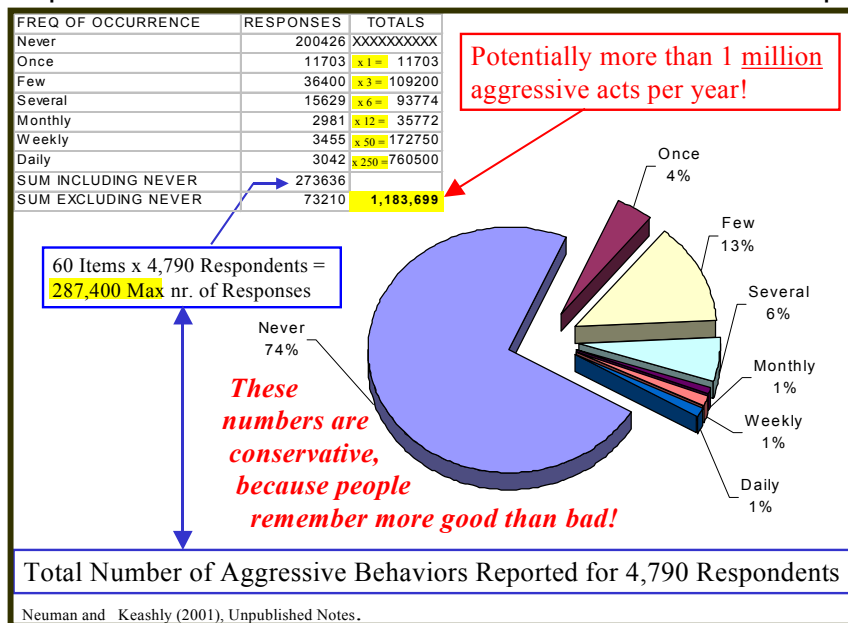# CHARACTERISTICS OF STRESS AND AGGRESSION WITHIN VA

WHAT WE KNOW

From data we've collected to date, using the Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire, we know a good deal about…

- The prevalence of aggression
- The nature/forms of aggression
- The sources and targets of aggression
- The persistence and patterns of aggression
- The extent to which targets claim the behavior bothers them
- What targets do in response to aggression

The questionnaire contains descriptions of 60 different aggressive behaviors. Each respondent can indicate that he or she experienced, during the past twelve months, as few as zero, or as many as 60 aggressive behaviors, on one or more occasions.

Looking at the entire sample of all the behaviors found in each of the surveys, the respondents indicated that 26% of the total number of possible behaviors in the total sample actually happened. If you total the number of responses for each category and sum these data, you could (conservatively) demonstrate that more than 1 million discrete aggressive behaviors occur each year—and this only represents 26 VA facilities (11 pilot sites and 15 comparison sites).

FREQ OF OCCURRENCE	RESPONSES	TOTALS
Never	200426	XXXXXXXXX
Once	11703	x 1 = 11703
Few	36400	x 3 = 109200
Several	15629	x 6 = 93774
Monthly	2981	x 12 = 35772
Weekly	3455	x 50 = 172750
Daily	3042	x 250 = 760500
SUM INCLUDING NEVER	273636	
SUM EXCLUDING NEVER	73210	1,183,699

Potentially more than 1 million aggressive acts per year!

60 Items x 4,790 Respondents = 287,400 Max nr. of Responses

These numbers are conservative, because people remember more good than bad!

Once 4%
Few 13%
Several 6%
Monthly 1%
Weekly 1%
Daily 1%
Never 74%

Total Number of Aggressive Behaviors Reported for 4,790 Respondents

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

Please keep in mind that much research in cognitive psychology suggests that people tend to remember more of the good things that happen to them, as opposed to the bad. In short, psychological forces result in an "under-reporting" of aggression. This creates a problem when using retrospective accounts, like our questionnaire. This means that the numbers shown above are probably conservative.

What Is Happening

The following chart reflects the most current data. It shows, for each administration, the top ten aggressive behaviors the respondents reported. With two exceptions ("Others being turned against you" in NCA and "Prevented from expressing yourself"), in VBA the remaining eight behaviors are common to all three top ten lists.

TOP TEN AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS BY ADMINISTRATION

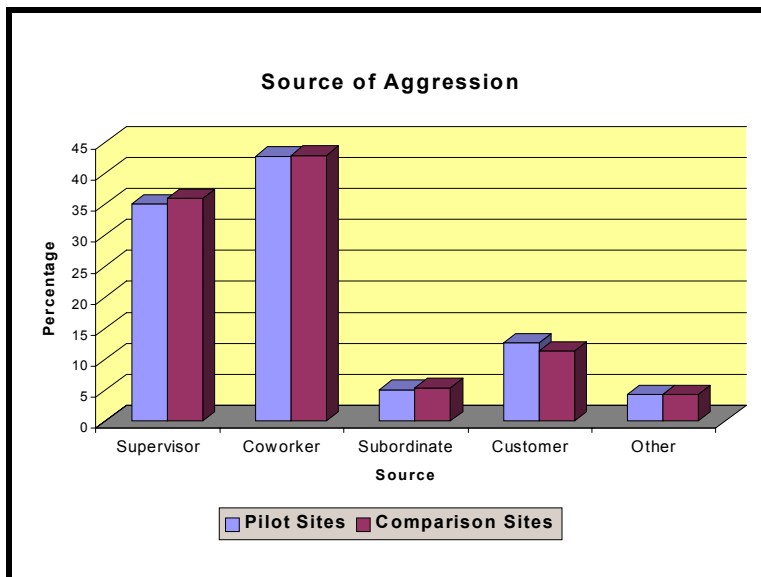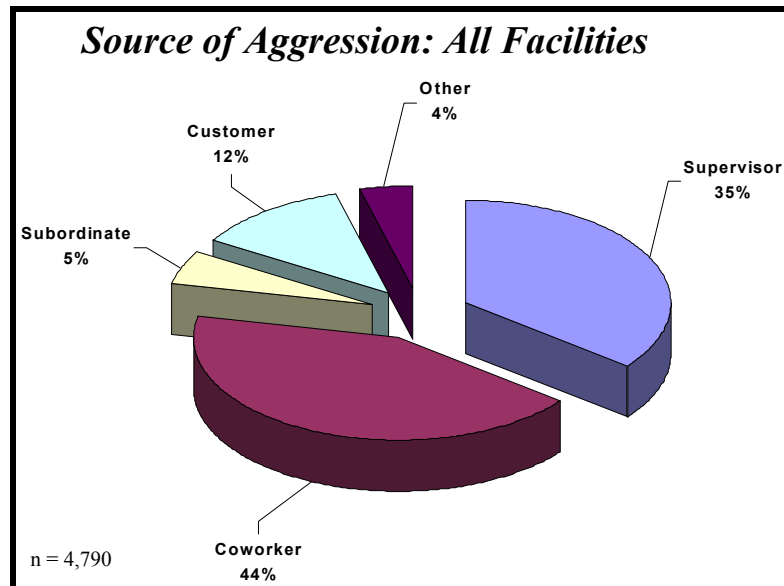| Veterans Benefits Administration	Veterans Health Administration	National Cemetery Administration
Not given praise for which entitled.	Rude and/or disrespectful treatment	Given the "silent treatment"
Rude and/or disrespectful treatment	Not given praise for which entitled	Glared at in a hostile manner
Given little feedback about your performance	Glared at in a hostile manner	Rude and/or disrespectful treatment
Others delayed action on matters important to you	Others delayed action on matters important to you	Lied to
Others failed to give you information that you really needed	Given little feedback	Not given praise for which entitled
Glared at in a hostile manner	Given the "silent treatment"	Attempts made to have others turn against you
Lied to	Lied to	Target of rumors or gossip
Interference with your work activities	Others failed to give you information that you really needed	Others failed to give you information that you really needed
Given the "silent treatment"	Contributions ignored by others	Prevented from expressing oneself (e.g. interrupted when speaking)
Prevented from expressing oneself (e.g. interrupted when speaking)	Interference with your work activities	Interference with your work activities

These behaviors are perceptions, but they are behaviors the respondents perceive as occurring over time. Some of these behaviors, such as glaring, may be unintentional; however, if the person responding to the behavior perceives hostile intent that is the reality the person is experiencing and reporting.

SOURCE OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

Co-workers are responsible for the majority of behaviors (44%). Supervisors are second (35%). The breakdown is consistent with the studies of other researchers as well as those we have done in other organizations.

Co-workers are responsible for the majority of behaviors (44%). Supervisors are second (35%). The breakdown is consistent with the studies of other researchers as well as those we have done in other organizations.

Source of Aggression: All Facilities

Other 4%

Customer 12%

Subordinate 5%

Supervisor 35%

Coworker 44%

n = 4,790

Source of Aggression

Percentage

Supervisor Coworker Subordinate Customer Other

Source

Pilot Sites   Comparison Sites

If we look at the pilot sites and the comparison sites, we see that the breakdown is consistent. It is very important for the research methodology to know that there is no difference between the comparison sites and the pilot sites.

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Source of Aggression by Admin

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.
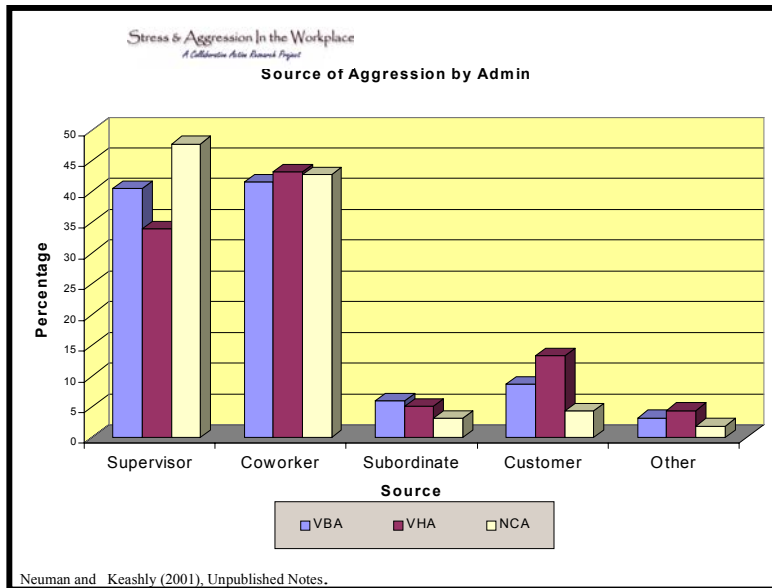
The data suggest that across the administrations, there are differences. In NCA, supervisors are the leading source of aggression. In VHA, the respondents indicate that they are experiencing more aggression from "customers" (i.e., veterans seeking health care services) than those in the other administrations.

What is different about the interface between "customers" and VHA employees that causes VHA employees to report more aggression from customers than do VBA or NCA employees?

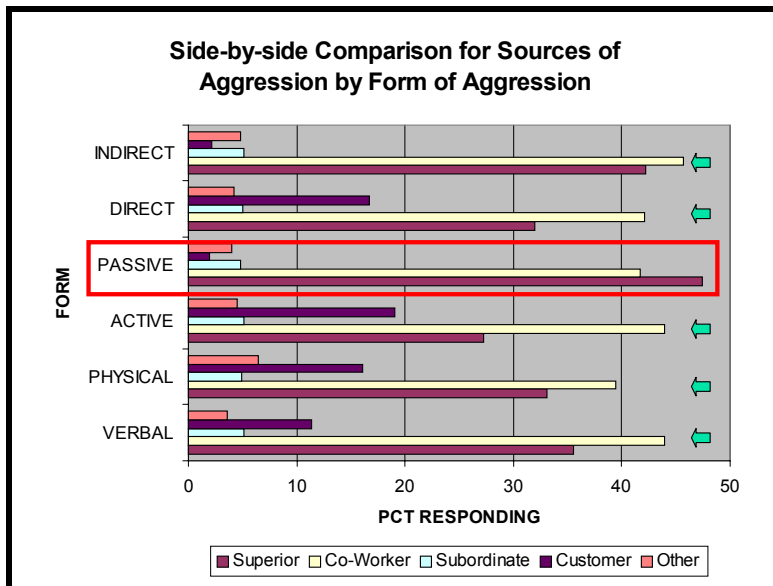There are also differences in the types of behaviors that supervisors, co-workers and customers exhibit.

TOP TEN AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS BY SOURCE

Supervisor	Co-Worker	Customer
Given little or no feedback	Glared at in a hostile manner	Glared at in a hostile manner
Not given praise for which entitled.	Given the "silent treatment"	Rude and/ or disrespectful treatment
Unfair workloads or deadlines	Interference with your work activities	Sworn at
Glared at in a hostile manner	Rude and/or disrespectful treatment	Yelled or shouted at
Others delayed action on matters important to you	Prevented from expressing self (e.g. interrupted when speaking)	Subjected to obscene or hostile gestures
Lied to	Flaunt status or treat you in a condescending manner	Interference with your work activities
Given the "silent treatment"	Target of rumors or gossip	Lied to
Rude and/ or disrespectful treatment	Others delayed action on matters important to you	Negative comments about intelligence or competence
Contributions ignored by others	Refused requests for assistance	Subjected to derogatory name calling
Others failed to give you information that you really needed	Others failed to give you information that you really needed	Kicked/bitten/spat on

TYPES OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR BY SOURCE

(Appendix C provides a list of the six categories of aggressive behavior).

Side-by-side Comparison for Sources of Aggression by Form of Aggression

FORM (y-axis categories, top to bottom): INDIRECT, DIRECT, PASSIVE, ACTIVE, PHYSICAL, VERBAL

PCT RESPONDING (x-axis): 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50

Legend: ■ Superior ☐ Co-Worker ☐ Subordinate ■ Customer ■ Other

Why do supervisors engage in more passive aggressive behaviors than co-workers or customers?

Co-workers lead in indirect, direct, active, physical and verbal aggression; supervisors, however, are the source of the most passive aggressive behavior.

SOURCE OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AND STRESS

Perceptions of stress were higher, when supervisors were the source of aggression.

Why do employees feel more stress if they perceive that their supervisors are the chief source of aggression?

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Source x Stress

Stress (y-axis): 2.60, 2.70, 2.80, 2.90, 3.00, 3.10, 3.20

Source of Aggression (x-axis): Coworker, Supervisor, Customer

Columns with different colors differ significantly p < .05

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes
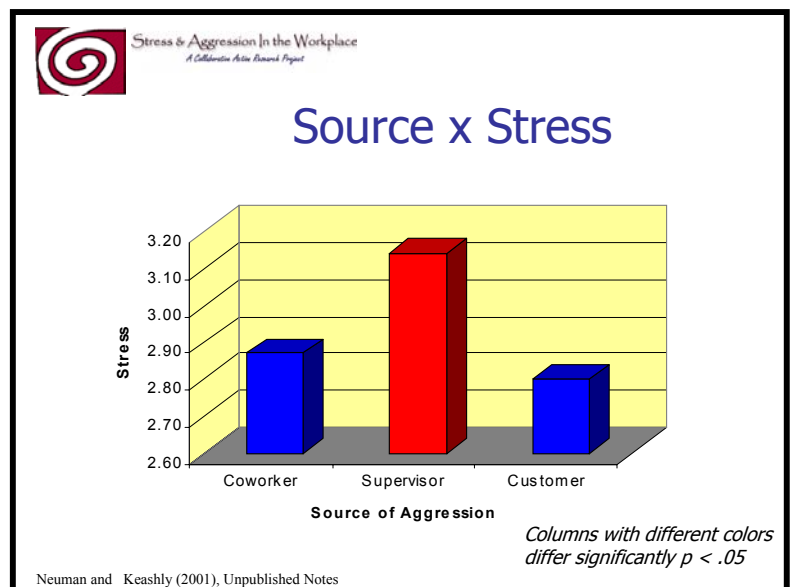
BULLYING – PERSISTENT PATTERNS OF AGGRESSION

Researchers in Europe have focused on a particular kind of aggression, bullying. They define bullying as persistent patterns of aggression. We divided the responses into four groups:
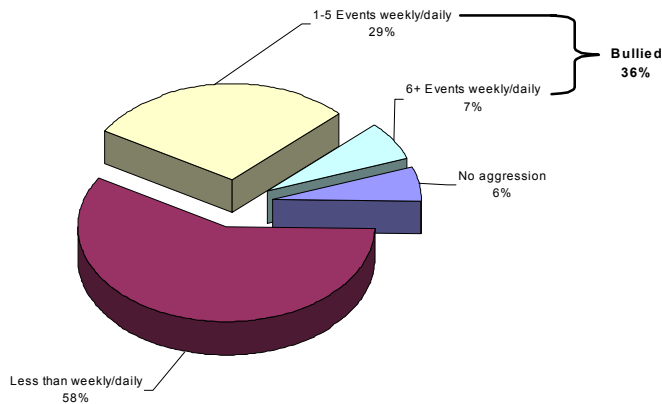
I. **No Aggression**

II. Non-Bullied Group - Some aggression but less than weekly

III. Bullied - 1-5 events at least weekly

IV. **Severely Bullied** – 6+ event**s**

Bullying: Persistent Patterns of Aggression within VA

- 1-5 Events weekly/daily 29%
- 6+ Events weekly/daily 7%
- **Bullied 36%**
- No aggression 6%
- Less than weekly/daily 58%

Neuman and Keashly, .
Unpublished Notes, 2001.

In VA, 29% of the respondents reporting aggressive behaviors indicate they experience one to five different aggressive events weekly or daily, while 7% report six or more aggressive events weekly or daily. So, 36% of the respondents indicate that they are encountering bullying, or persistent patterns of

Persistence of Aggression and Perceptions of Stress / Tension
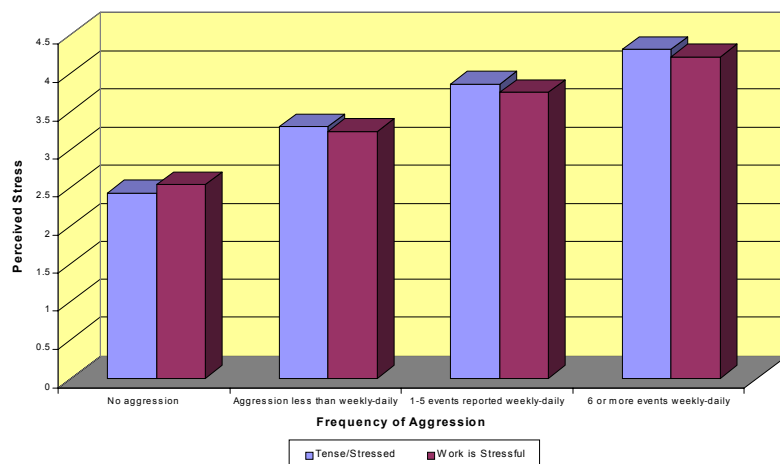
The more bullying a person encounters the greater the perceptions of stress and tension.

Frequency of Aggression

Tense/Stressed   Work is Stressful

SOURCES OF AGGRESSION, BULLYING, AND THEIR IMPACT

Source x Bullying and Emotional Impact

Neumann and Keashly (2002)
"Persistent Patterns of Workplace Aggression."

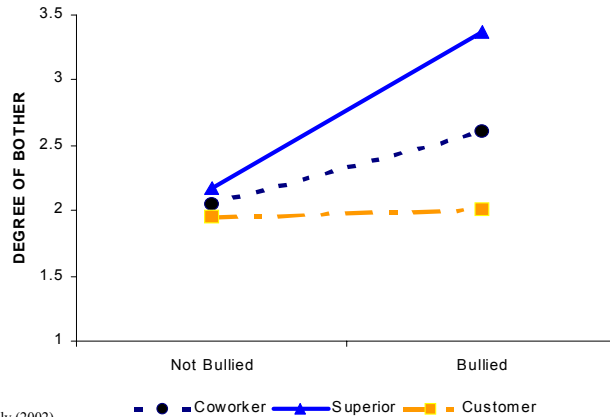Using the four groups of behaviors (No aggression, Non-Bullied, Bullied, and Severely Bullied), the survey showed that the respondents indicated that they are significantly more bothered when supervisors exhibit bullying than when co-workers or customers exhibit these behaviors.

REPORTING AGGRESSIVE ACTS

Filing Formal Grievance/Complaint as a Function of Persistence of Aggression

EVEN WHEN BEHAVIORS OCCUR OFTEN & PERSIST OVER TIME

NOTE: Seldom do people file formal complaints

Neuman and Keashly, .
Unpublished Notes, 2001.

Why don't employees file formal complaints, or grievances, for aggressive acts that persist overtime?

If you compare the number of formal grievances and complaints with the number of aggressive acts, the number is low. While formal actions are low, there is a significant amount of aggression that goes unreported.

EEO COMPLAINTS AND THE SURVEY DATA

While the project's survey did not look specifically at EEO complaints, it did include behaviors that could be considered EEO related. While there were 96 complaints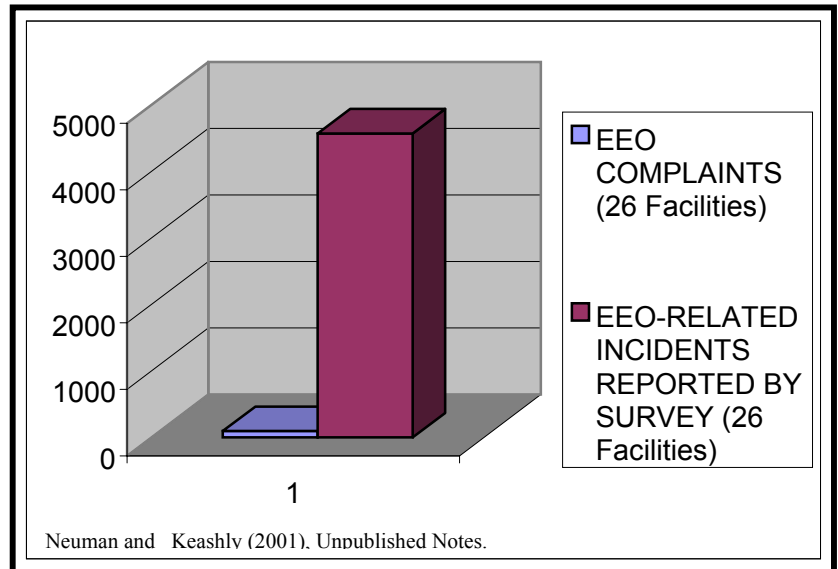 filed at the 26 facilities involved in the survey's administration, the survey shows that for the same reporting period there were 4,569 incidents of aggressive behavior that related to the nine behaviors that are potentially EEO items.

- EEO COMPLAINTS (26 Facilities)
- EEO-RELATED INCIDENTS REPORTED BY SURVEY (26 Facilities)

Neuman and Keashly (2001). Unpublished Notes.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS RELATED TO EEO ITEMS	Totals
Subjected to negative comments about your religious beliefs	462
Subjected to negative comments about a disability	397
Subjected to unwanted attempts to touch, fondle, kiss, or grab you	468
Subjected to negative comments about your sexual orientation	126
Subjected to racist remarks	318
Subjected to ethnic or racial slurs	513
Subjected to unwanted terms of endearment	460
Subjected to suggestive and/or offensive stories	954
Subjected to sexist remarks	871
Grand Total	4, 569

Since VA has had sexual harassment and diversity training what does it mean that in the survey employees reported these behaviors?

Why are employees reporting these behaviors even though VA has a formal complaint procedure?

Would the existence of these behaviors in the workplace create a hostile work environment?

OFFICE OF WORKERS COMPENSATION CLAIMS AND THE SURVEY DATA

As part of the analysis, we identified those questions that one could consider related to Workers Compensation Violence Claims.

In VA during 2001, there were 415 violence claims filed. In the 26 facilities in the survey, there were 6,208 violence-related incidents reported during the same reporting period.

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.
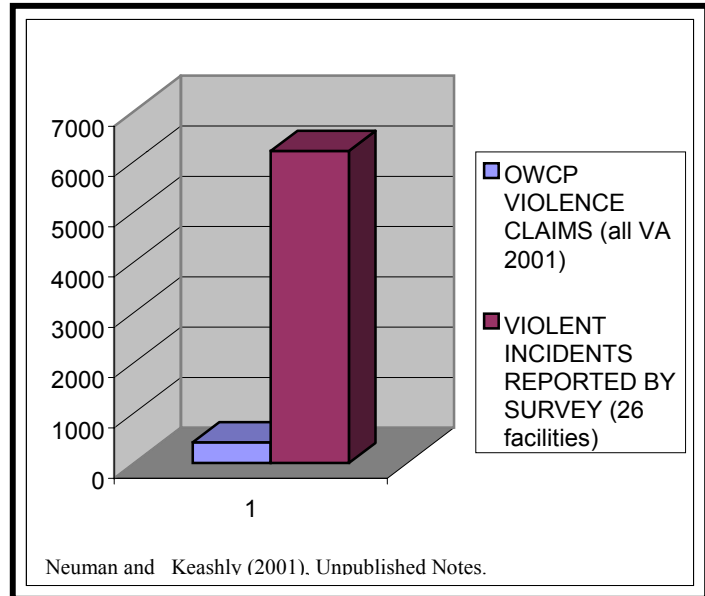
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS RELATED TO OWCP ITEMS	Totals
Sworn at in a hostile manner	1,513
Subjected to obscene or hostile gestures	1,015
Yelled at or shouted at in a hostile manner	1,945
Kicked, bitten, or spat on	364
Had someone hit you with an object	300
Threatened with physical harm	608
Pushed, shoved, thrown or bumped into with unnecessary force	364
Raped or sexually assaulted	22
Assaulted with a weapon or other dangerous object	77
Grand Total	6,208

Is there a relationship at the project sites between disciplinary /adverse actions taken and the evidence of aggression from the survey and from the violence-related incidents reports?

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND AGGRESSION

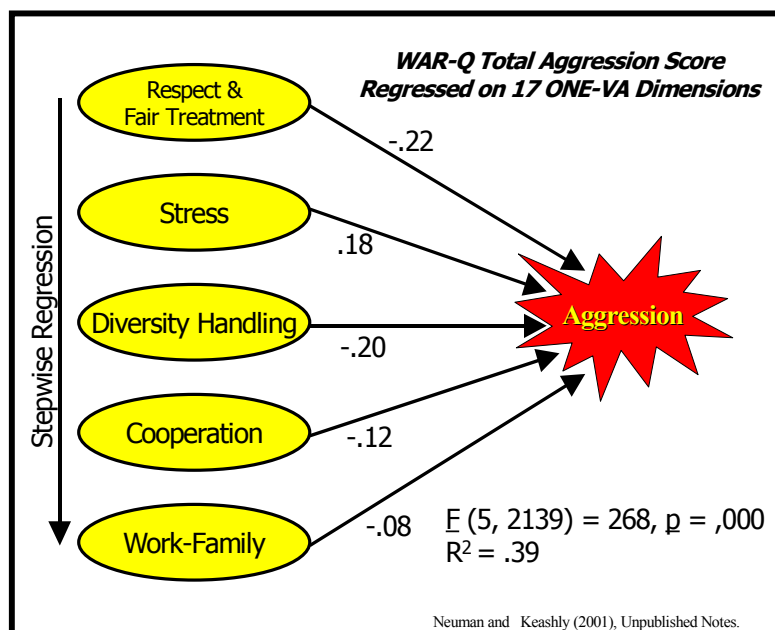We know a great deal about job satisfaction and we know that satisfaction is related to business outcomes and to intentions to quit. As a result of this study, we know which behaviors related to aggression are associated with employee satisfaction.

Of the six aggressive behaviors most strongly associated with employee satisfaction and intention to quit, only one ("Being given unreasonable workloads or deadlines more than others," might be beyond the control of supervisors as they deal with real business pressure and the need to increase productivity. The remaining five are behaviors that anyone could easily control

- **NOT GIVEN PRAISE FOR WHICH YOU FELT ENTITLED**
- **TREATED IN A RUDE AND/OR DISRESPECTFUL MANNER**
- **HAVING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS IGNORED BY OTHERS**
- **BEING LIED TO**
- *BEING GIVEN UNREASONABLE WORKLOADS OR DEADLINES MORE THAN OTHERS*
- **BEING SHOWN LITTLE EMPATHY/SYMPATHY WHEN HAVING A TOUGH TIME**

Satisfaction With Job

Satisfaction With Organization

Intention to Quit

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

WAR-Q Total Aggression Score Regressed on 17 ONE-VA Dimensions

Stepwise Regression

- Respect & Fair Treatment —.22
- Stress .18
- Diversity Handling —.20
- Cooperation —.12
- Work-Family —.08

Aggression

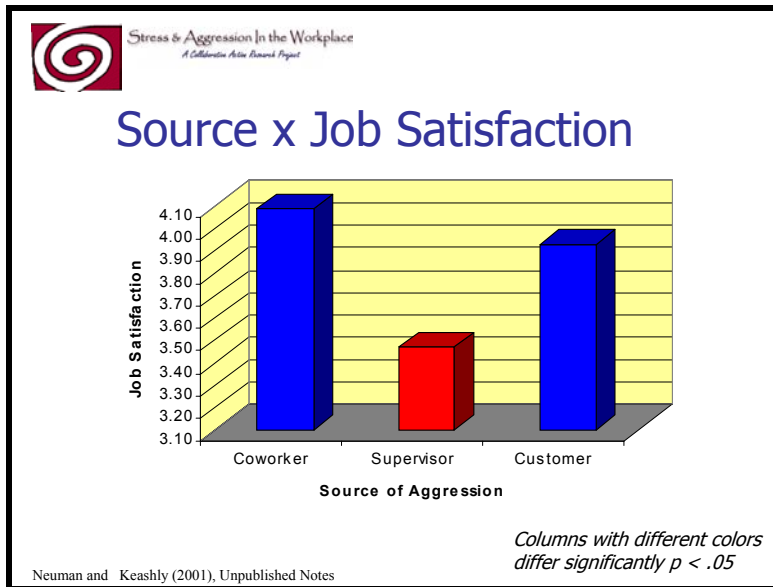$F_{(5, 2139)} = 268$, $p = ,000$
$R^2 = .39$

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

Using dimensions developed from the 1997 One VA Employee Satisfaction survey, five were very directly related to the experience of aggression in the workplace. They were:
- Respect and Fair Treatment
- Stress
- Diversity Handling
- Cooperation among people, and
- Work-family Issues

SOURCES OF AGGRESSION AND SATISFACTION WITH THE JOB AND THE ORGANIZATION

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Source x Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction (y-axis): 4.10, 4.00, 3.90, 3.80, 3.70, 3.60, 3.50, 3.40, 3.30, 3.20, 3.10

Source of Aggression (x-axis): Coworker, Supervisor, Customer

Columns with different colors differ significantly $p < .05$

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes

Employees indicated that if the supervisor was the source of aggression, job satisfaction was significantly lower

Stress & Aggression In the Workplace
A Collaborative Action Research Project

Source x Satisfaction with Org

Job Satisfaction (y-axis): 4.10, 4.00, 3.90, 3.80, 3.70, 3.60, 3.50, 3.40, 3.30, 3.20, 3.10

Source of Aggression (x-axis): Coworker, Supervisor, Customer

Columns with different colors differ significantly $p < .05$

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes
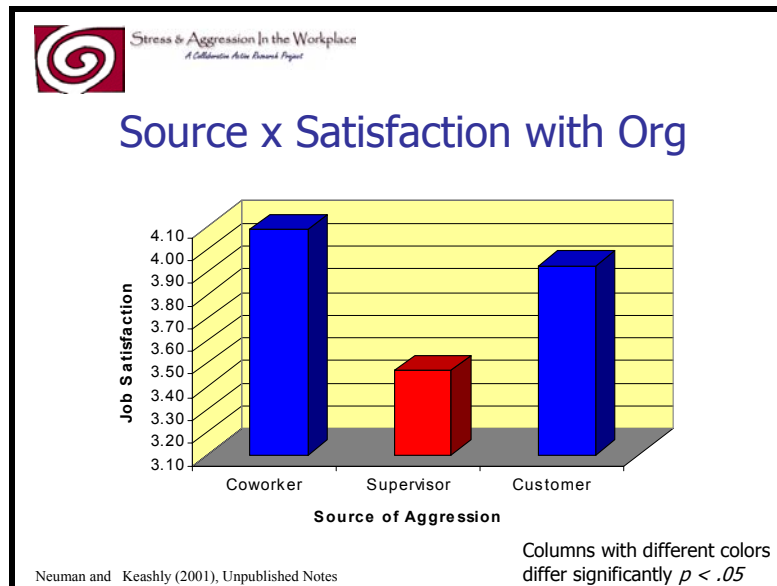
If employees perceived that supervisors were the source of aggression, satisfaction with the organization also was significantly lower.

BULLYING AND ITS IMPACT ON JOB AND ORGANIZATIONAL SATISFACTION
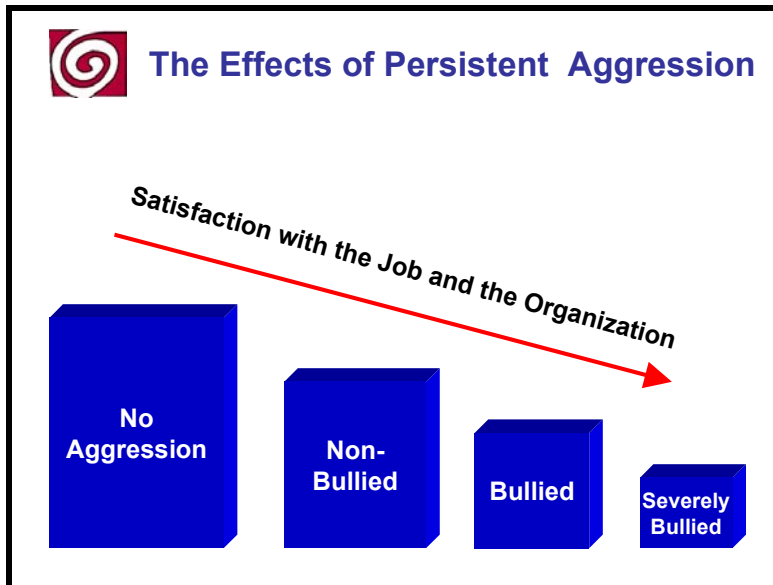
The Effects of Persistent Aggression

Satisfaction with the Job and the Organization

No Aggression

Non-Bullied

Bullied

Severely Bullied

What impact does bullying by supervisors have on satisfaction with the job and with the organization?

Satisfaction with the job and with the organization was lower as employees perceived more persistent patterns of bullying behavior

PERCEPTIONS OF STRESS AND INTENTIONS TO QUIT

Our analysis has shown that people who perceive they are feeling high levels of stress also indicate a greater intent to leave the organization.

Perceptions of Stress is Significantly Related to Intentions to Leave the Organization

Intention to Quit and Stress

Self-Reported Level of Stress

4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0

Intention to Stay

Intention to Quit

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND IMPACT ON STRESS AND INTENTIONS TO QUIT

The Effects of Persistent Aggression

Stress and Intentions to Leave the Organization

No Aggression

Non-Bullied

Bullied

Severely Bullied
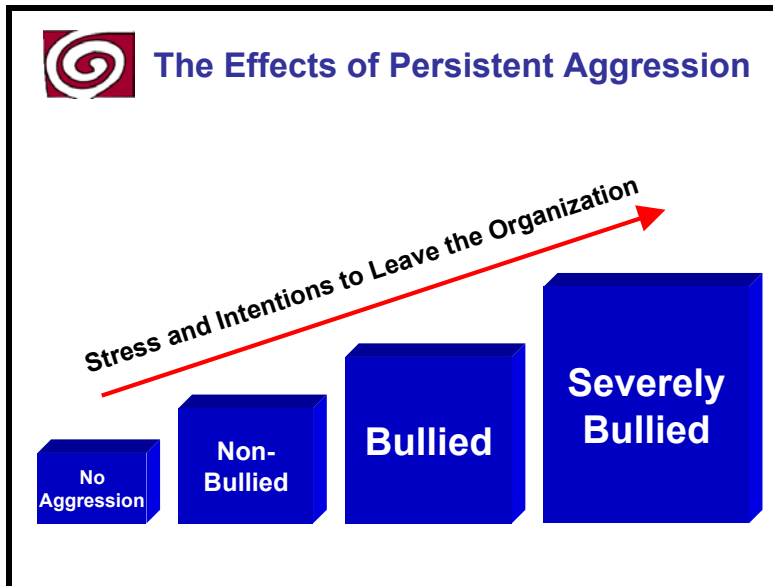
Does the impact of bullying on stress and intention to leave the organization depend upon who does the bullying?

Those employees who perceived higher levels of bullying also showed greater stress and an intention to leave the organization.

Questions

If higher levels of aggression adversely affect retention, what interventions can VA take to retain employees?

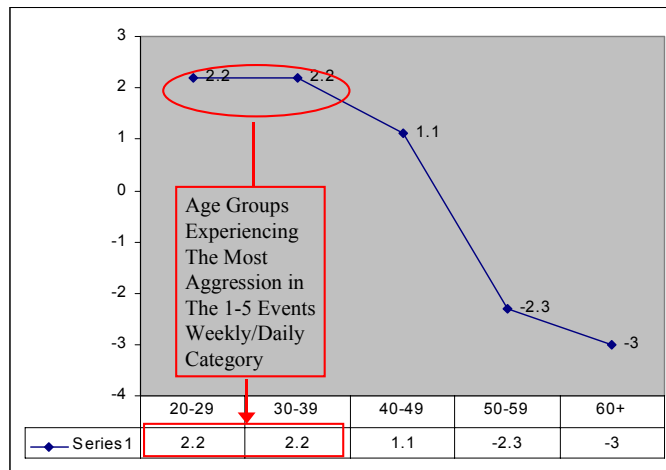How can supervisors deal with perceptions of employees as they work to create a workplace that will attract and keep employees?

Does being sensitized to low-level aggression help to reduce it? That is, when people are made aware of subtler, passive, covert forms of aggression does this awareness lead to the reduction of such behavior?   Does it produce an increase in the reporting of such incidents?

AGE AND EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING

1-5 Aggressive Events Weekly/Daily Plotted Against Respondents' Age

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Series1	2.2	2.2	1.1	-2.3	-3

Age Groups Experiencing The Most Aggression in The 1-5 Events Weekly/Daily Category

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

The younger age groups reported experiencing more bullying than the other age groups.

INTENTIONS TO QUIT AND AGE

Intentions to Quit and Age
Q91 – I am considering leaving this organization

# Resp	Age	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
151	20-29	22.5%	15.9%	38.4%
540	30-39	23.1%	10.4%	33.5%
1409	40-49	20.2%	8.8%	29%

Neuman and Keashly (2001), Unpublished Notes.

AND

We found that employees in the younger age groups were more likely to indicate that they intended to leave VA.

Questions

- Are these younger age groups more likely to quit because of the fact that they have a more portable retirement system?
- Are these younger age groups responding to their experience with a "command and control" management and viewing this style of management as bullying?
- Are the greater numbers of women and minorities in the younger age groups? And if so, do they affect the younger age groups' perceptions of aggressive behaviors and their intention to leave?

More Questions

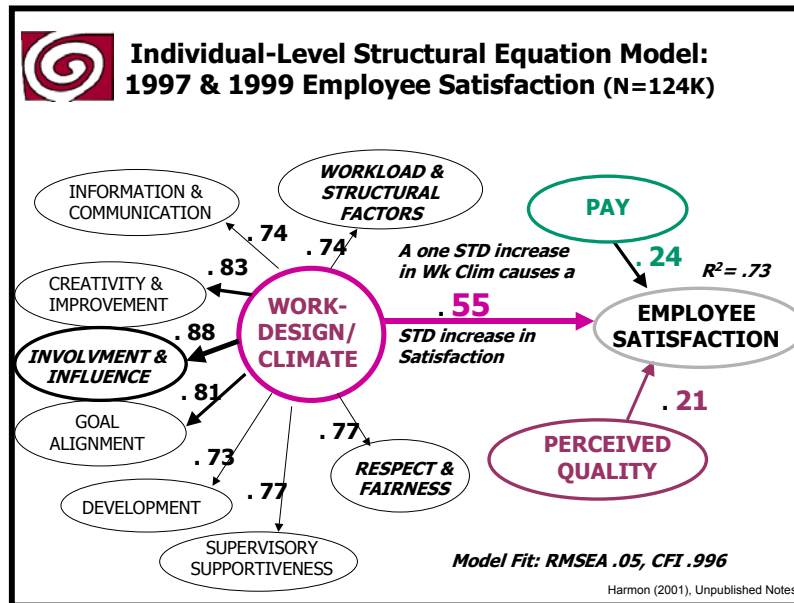Our project has helped us identify more questions about what we know we do not know.

Questions

- Are the relationships we have identified causal?
- What is the precise nature of the relationships among aggression, stress, and performance?
- Will our interventions have a positive and long-lasting impact on interpersonal relations, group process, and organizational performance?
- Since current leadership programs within VA provide for the development of interpersonal skills, why are the respondents reporting bullying behaviors on the part of supervisors?
- Do current leadership programs within VA incorporate positive behavioral models and development that will recognize the difference between an assertive leader and an aggressive leader? Which patterns of behavior do these programs value more? Assertive leadership or aggressive leadership?
- What is the relationship between gender and these aggressive behaviors?

THE SURVEY, EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND BUSINESS RESULTS

Using statistical modeling, we were able to predict which factors in the organization could produce positive results. Looking at the survey data collected at three separate points of time, our analysis identified the factors that seemed to matter the most.

Individual-Level Structural Equation Model: 1997 & 1999 Employee Satisfaction (N=124K)

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

WORKLOAD & STRUCTURAL FACTORS

PAY

.74

.74

.24

A one STD increase in Wk Clim causes a

$R^2 = .73$

CREATIVITY & IMPROVEMENT

.83

WORK-DESIGN/ CLIMATE

.55

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

STD increase in Satisfaction

INVOLVMENT & INFLUENCE

.88

GOAL ALIGNMENT

.81

.77

.21

DEVELOPMENT

.73

RESPECT & FAIRNESS

PERCEIVED QUALITY

.77

SUPERVISORY SUPPORTIVENESS

Model Fit: RMSEA .05, CFI .996

Harmon (2001), Unpublished Notes.

If you wanted to predict how satisfied people were going to be, there were three factors that were the most powerful.

- Work climate

- Pay

- Perceived Quality (how well they were serving veterans, the quality of their work)
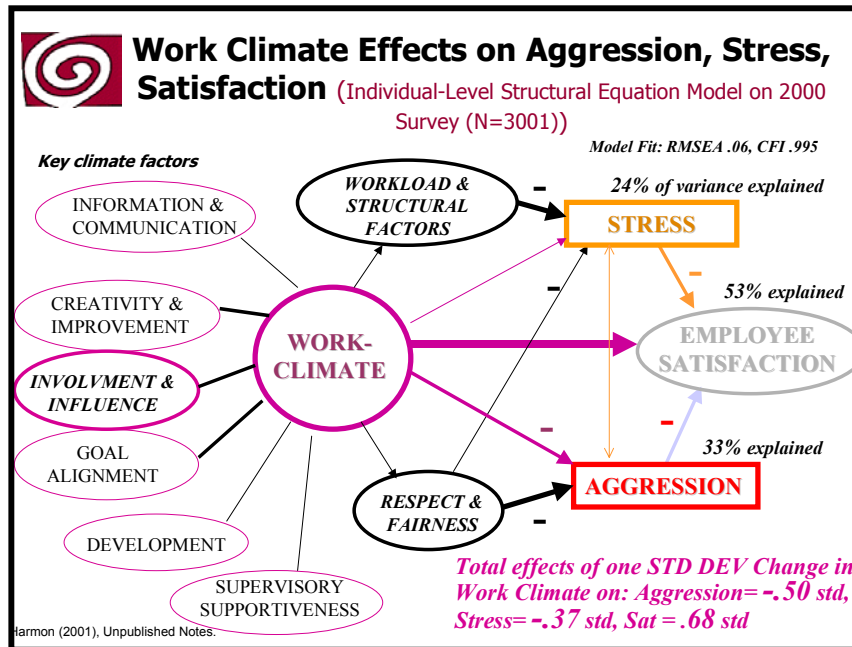
WORK CLIMATE

Our modeling showed that Work Design or Climate consisted of eight sub-factors that worked together. Since an organization is a system, you have to be aware of how factors work together to produce results.

Involvement and Influence – Efforts to get opinions and to get employees involved.	**Creativity and Improvement** – The organization encourages people to try new ways of doing things. Supervisors are open to change.
Goal Alignment – Managers explain to employees how their work contributes to organizational goals.	**Information and Communication** – Managers and supervisors keep employees informed about their job and the organization.
Supervisory Trust and Supportiveness – The degree to which there is trust between employees and supervisors. Supervisors help and support employees.	**Skill Development** – The degree to which employees get training to enhance performance and career opportunities.
Work and Structural Factors – Workload is reasonable. There are minimum interruptions and "red tape."	**Fairness** – People are respected. The organization handles disciplinary actions and disputes fairly

WORK CLIMATE'S EFFECTS ON AGGRESSION, STRESS AND SATISFACTION

Our analysis has identified how several key factors interact to impact stress, aggression and employee satisfaction.

Work Climate Effects on Aggression, Stress, Satisfaction (Individual-Level Structural Equation Model on 2000 Survey (N=3001))

Model Fit: RMSEA .06, CFI .995

Total effects of one STD DEV Change in Work Climate on: Aggression= -.50 std, Stress= -.37 std, Sat = .68 std

Harmon (2001), Unpublished Notes.

The causal map demonstrates that the following six factors included within work climate interact to directly affect employee satisfaction:

- Information and Communication
- Creativity and Improvement
- Involvement and Influence
- Goal Alignment
- Development
- Supervisory Supportiveness

It also shows that work climate further impacts employee satisfaction through a chain reaction of interrelated effects on employees perceptions of:
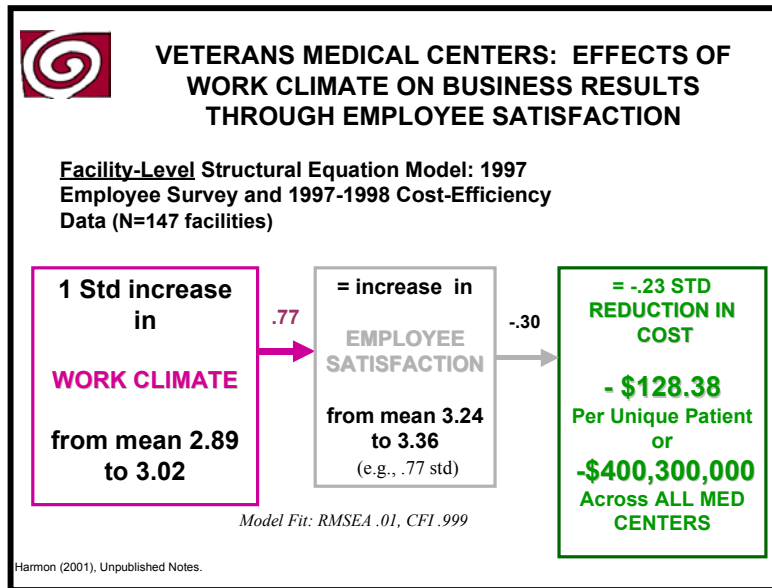
- Workload and Structural Obstacles,
- Respect and Fairness,
- Stress, and
- Aggression

An organization is a complex system and actions within it may affect factors you did not expect. The causal map simply provides the organizations with possibilities to consider as it discusses possible courses of action.

WORK CLIMATE'S EFFECTS ON BUSINESS RESULTS WORKING THROUGH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Prior research on factors affecting organization performance exists which explains factors affecting business results. Our project is identifying ways in which work climate affects employee satisfaction and the resulting impact that employee satisfaction has on such things as patient costs and claims processing time.

VETERANS MEDICAL CENTERS: EFFECTS OF WORK CLIMATE ON BUSINESS RESULTS THROUGH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Facility-Level Structural Equation Model: 1997 Employee Survey and 1997-1998 Cost-Efficiency Data (N=147 facilities)

1 Std increase in **WORK CLIMATE** from mean 2.89 to 3.02

.77

= increase in EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION from mean 3.24 to 3.36 (e.g., .77 std)

-.30

= -.23 STD **REDUCTION IN COST**

- $128.38 Per Unique Patient or **-$400,300,000** Across ALL MED CENTERS

Model Fit: RMSEA .01, CFI .999
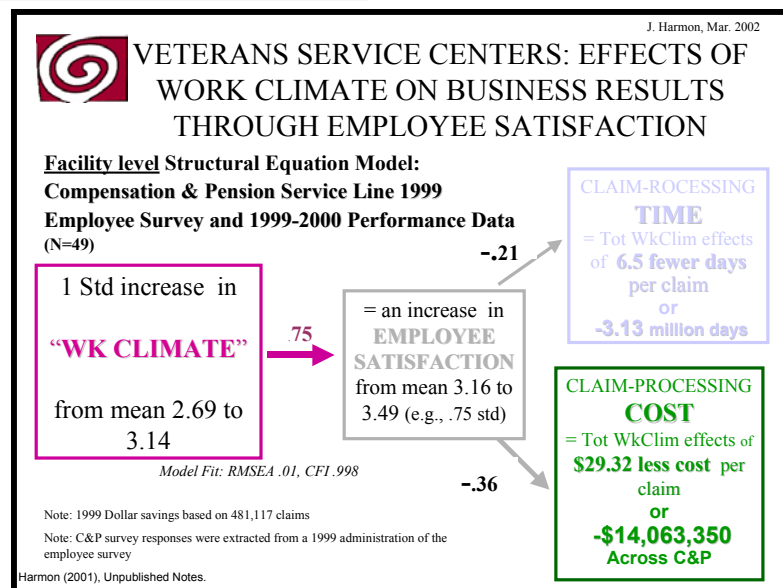
Harmon (2001), Unpublished Notes.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

A modest improvement in work climate is associated with a significant increase in employee satisfaction, which in turn is linked to savings of hundreds of millions of dollars in service delivery costs.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINSTRATION

A modest improvement in work climate is associated with a significant increase in employee satisfaction, which in turn is linked to savings of hundreds of millions of dollars in service delivery costs.

J. Harmon, Mar. 2002

VETERANS SERVICE CENTERS: EFFECTS OF WORK CLIMATE ON BUSINESS RESULTS THROUGH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Facility level Structural Equation Model: **Compensation & Pension Service Line 1999 Employee Survey and 1999-2000 Performance Data** (N=49)

1 Std increase in **"WK CLIMATE"** from mean 2.69 to 3.14

.75

= an increase in EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION from mean 3.16 to 3.49 (e.g., .75 std)

-.21

CLAIM-ROCESSING **TIME** = Tot WkClim effects of **6.5 fewer days per claim** or **-3.13 million days**

-.36

CLAIM-PROCESSING **COST** = Tot WkClim effects of **$29.32 less cost** per claim or **-$14,063,350** Across C&P

Model Fit: RMSEA .01, CFI .998

Note: 1999 Dollar savings based on 481,117 claims

Note: C&P survey responses were extracted from a 1999 administration of the employee survey

Harmon (2001), Unpublished Notes.

During the next phase of the project, we will be validating these models with new data from the latest VA Employee Satisfaction Survey and from the project survey we will be conducting at the end of 2002.

WHAT WE KNOW

Work Climate, Stress, Aggression and Business Results
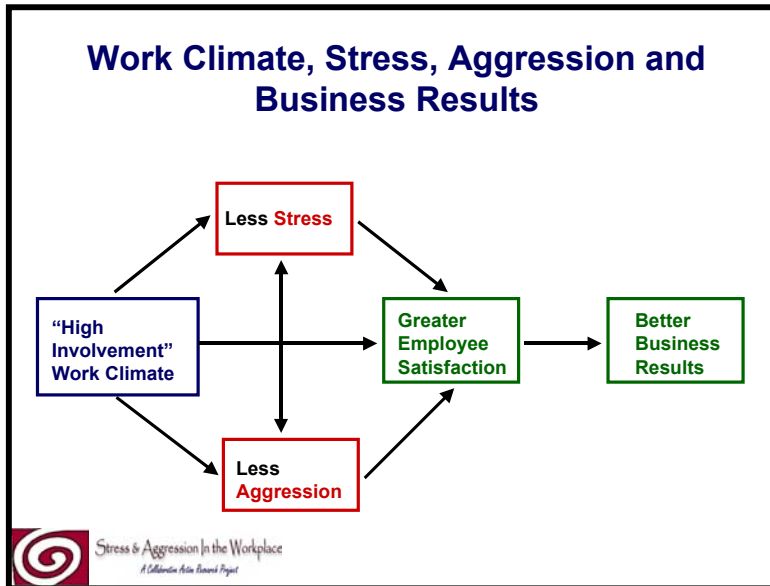
Although there are too few participating facilities to statistically test the effect of stress and aggression on performance at this point in time, the overall pattern of findings supports the following flow of causes and effects.

Based on our work and our analysis we know the following:

- High-Involvement, "empowered" work design/climate is strongly associated with lower stress and aggression and higher employee satisfaction
- A major portion of design/climate effects on stress and aggression are mediated through perceptions of fairness and workload/obstacles
- Increased employee satisfaction improves business results ("business case").
- There are some provocative differences between overall models and ones specific to each pilot site.
- Testing our findings for "face validity" with action teams is a critical part of the process. We would not have been led to discover or understand some of our quantitative results had it not been for frank conversations with action teams about the "numbers" and what they might mean.

Questions

- Will the data from the 2001 and 2002 surveys validate the statistical models?

- Will the interventions reduce stress and aggression, improve employee satisfaction and improve business results?

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Between January and September 2002, members of the Project Team visited pilot sites to interview the Action Team members, the Directors and the Union Presidents about the project and the facility. After interviewing each Action Team member privately, the interviewers worked with the team members to create a visual map capturing key aspects of the unique context in which they were operating (and that they were trying to change in some positive ways). These context maps represent the "story" of how the action teams experience their facilities, regional offices or cemetery. The maps provide a key to what the Action Teams can influence at the sites. (Appendix D provides an explanation of each of the composite context maps. Since only one NCA site is involved in the project, it was not possible to build a composite map. We have not included the Houston map.)

Veterans Health Administration


Veterans Benefits Administration
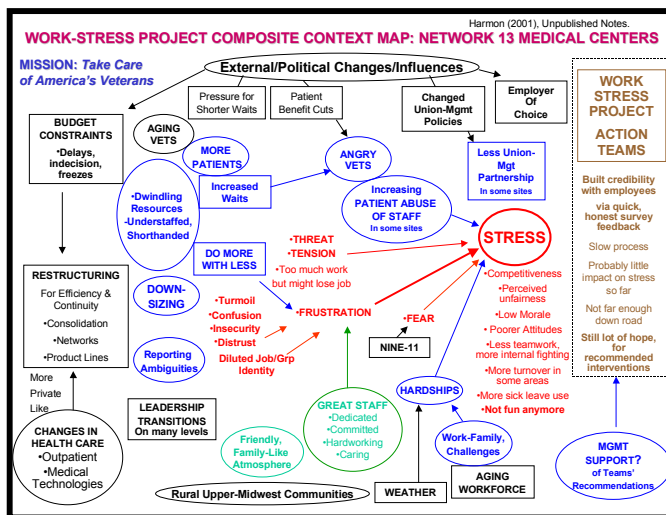
Context Maps: As Data and Discussion Tools

The context maps provide a clear, visual presentation of the results of interviews completed at the sites. They are data.

The maps are the result of interviews (qualitative data) conducted using carefully constructed and thoroughly discussed interview protocols. The interviews helped to develop the case study of the Action Team and the context of the facility in which the team was operating.
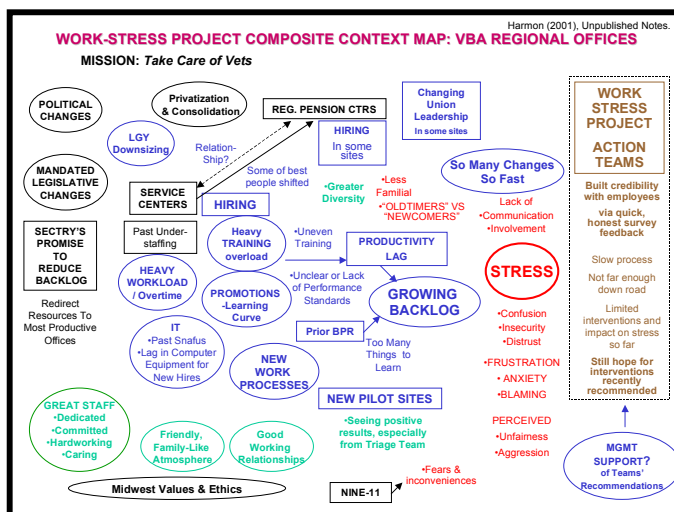
The entire process normally took a day-and-half and provided a quick, efficient way to develop a picture of what was happening at a facility. The maps, because they use the words of people from the sites, provide a safe way to raise sensitive issues and concerns.

LINKING THE CONTEXT MAP WITH THE SURVEY DATA

The site visits that we conducted provided us with an opportunity to develop a clear picture of how the Action Teams at the pilot sites viewed their facilities. Their stories provided qualitative data on the outside influences affecting the facilities and on how employees were experiencing the impact of these influences upon their facility.

Combining qualitative data with quantitative data that the surveys generated, we were able to look at the context maps and develop a clearer picture of the way people may be responding to survey dimensions based on their environment.
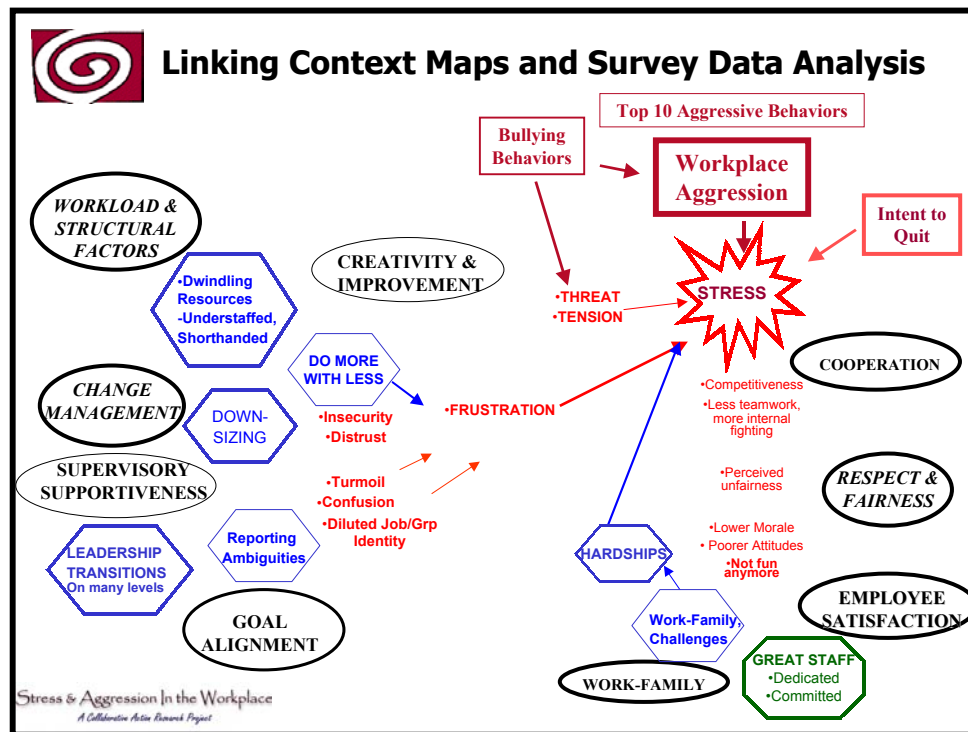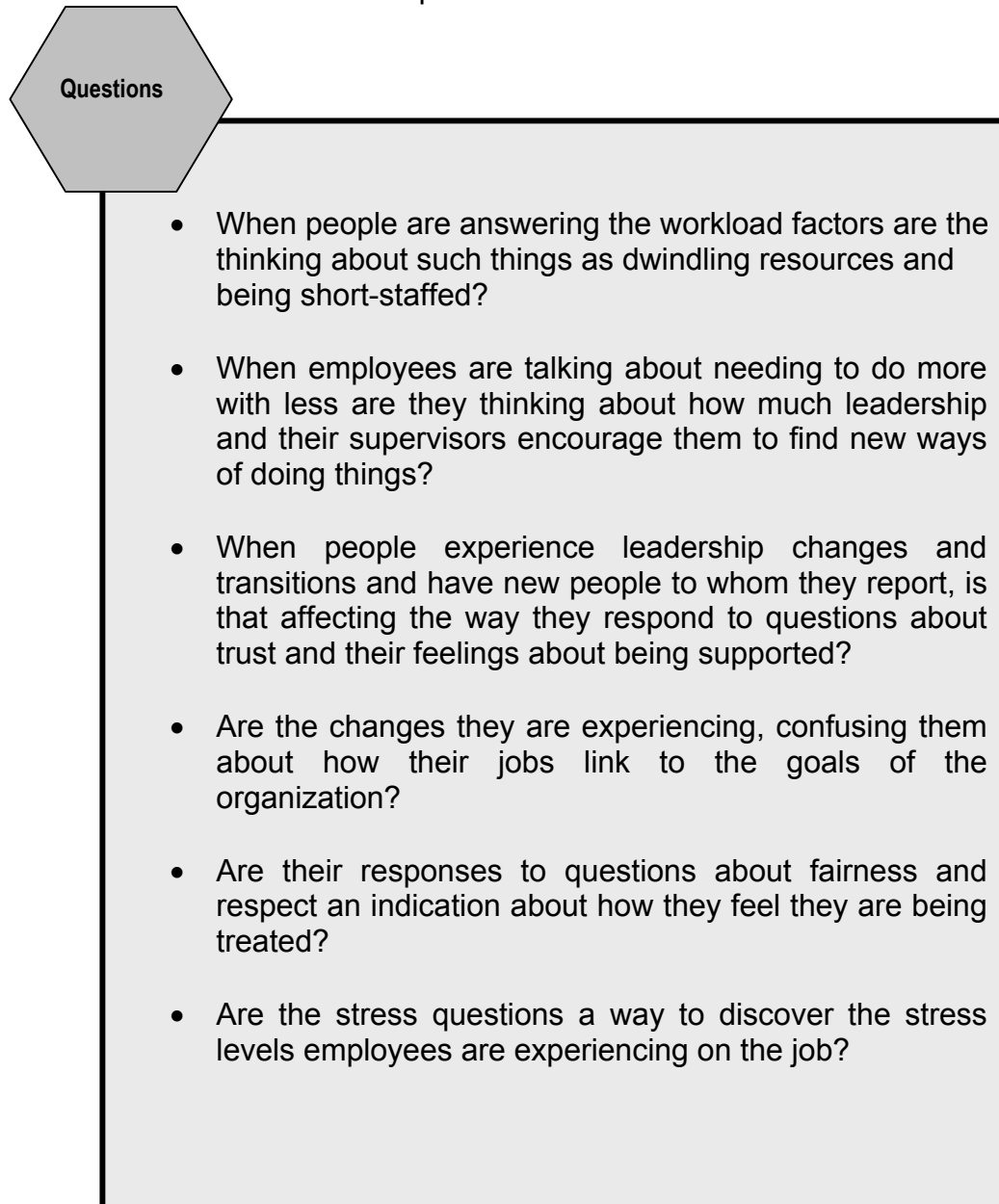

USING COMBINATION MAPS AS DISCUSSION TOOLS

Like the context maps done for the facilities, this combination map presents data visually. It helps to organize information so that possible relationships are more apparent. This map also depicts two different types of data. It depicts data developed from the surveys and statistical modeling (quantitative data – circles and rectangles) along with data developed from the site visit interviews (qualitative data – hexagons and plain text from the data developed from statistical modeling and the (quantitative data).

The use of mixed methods is typical of action research.

NEW QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

One of the things the inquiry and reflection process helps us to do it to discover questions we never previously thought of asking.   This map and its suggested connections raised a series of new questions to answer.

Questions

- When people are answering the workload factors are the thinking about such things as dwindling resources and being short-staffed?

- When employees are talking about needing to do more with less are they thinking about how much leadership and their supervisors encourage them to find new ways of doing things?

- When people experience leadership changes and transitions and have new people to whom they report, is that affecting the way they respond to questions about trust and their feelings about being supported?

- Are the changes they are experiencing, confusing them about how their jobs link to the goals of the organization?

- Are their responses to questions about fairness and respect an indication about how they feel they are being treated?

- Are the stress questions a way to discover the stress levels employees are experiencing on the job?

The context map poses other questions that we need to discuss and surface. When employees are answering survey questions, they are playing in their mind their story of the organizations. They are perceptions, but we must recognize, understand and respond to these perceptions.

INTERVENTIONS

An important part of the project involves implementing and evaluating interventions, or actions that the project participants put in place to help reduce workplace stress and aggression, and in doing so improve business results. What is an intervention? An intervention is any action that has an impact upon the organization. This project is using interventions that are project-wide and interventions that are site-specific.

PROJECT-WIDE INTERVENTIONS

The project-wide interventions generally grew from the initial proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF). The briefings to employees about the project and the survey that collected data about the work climate, stress and aggression at the sites were all project-wide interventions. They introduced within the organization new ideas about stress and aggression.

In addition, the process of using local Action Teams to take action on survey data was a project-wide intervention. The inquiry and learning practices helped the team members ask questions of data and of each other. They also help the team members become conscious of how they learn both individually and as a group, and in some cases as an organization.

Specifics about the major project-wide interventions follow.

The Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire

The Workplace Aggression Questionnaire (WAR-Q) is the first comprehensive instrument of its kind designed to measure the nature and prevalence of workplace aggression, identify characteristics of aggressors and targets, and determine the perceived causes and consequences of such behavior. Specifically, it

- Measures the nature (form) and relative frequency (duration and persistence) of aggression
- Identifies the source of aggression (i.e., supervisor, co-worker, subordinate, customer-client, other)
- Assesses perceptions of the causes of aggression
- Measures the degree of harm inflicted
- Identifies individual responses to aggression

The project gave the researchers the opportunity to develop and validate this new instrument. In addition to having international researchers have input into the design of this new tool, the researchers involved members of the Action Teams who were attending the conference held in Phoenix in September 2000, to provide feedback and suggest changes to the instrument.

J. Neuman and L. Keashly (2001), Workplace Aggression and Research Questionnaire.

WAR-Q

A. Have you been subject to any of **the behaviors listed below** in the past 12 months? Only consider those behaviors that have occurred in your workplace.

Note: The behaviors listed below represent actions that vary dramatically in terms of their intensity, seriousness, and consequences. As a result, there are instances where very dissimilar items may be grouped together.

B. How often have you been subjected to this behavior in your workplace over the past 12 months?

C. Who was most responsible for doing this to you?

		Never	Once	A Few Times	Several Times	Monthly	Weekly	Daily		Not Applicable	Superior	Co-Worker	Subordinate	Customer	Other
1.	Subjected to bad jokes ← SAMPLE ITEM	①	②	③	④	⑤	●	⑦		①	②	●	④	⑤	⑥
2.	Been glared at in a hostile manner														
3.	Been excluded from work-related social gatherings														
4.	Had others storm out of the work area when you entered														
5.	Had others consistently arrive late for meetings that you called														
6.	Been sworn at in a hostile manner														
7.	Been subjected to negative comments about your religious beliefs														
8.	Been given the "silent treatment"														
9.	Not been given the praise for which you felt entitled														
10.	Been treated in a rude and/or disrespectful manner														
11.	Had your personal property defaced, damaged, or stolen														
12.	Had others fail to take action to protect you from harm														
13.	Been subjected to negative comments about a disability														
14.	Been subjected to obscene or hostile gestures														
15.	Had others refuse your requests for assistance														
16.	Had others fail to deny false rumors about you														
17.	Been given little or no feedback about your performance														
18.	Had others delay action on matters that were important to you														
19.	Been yelled or shouted at in a hostile manner														
20.	Been subjected to negative comments about your intelligence or competence														

This instrument provides the project with baseline data on aggressive behaviors in VA.   These baseline data will allow the project to assess the impact of aggressive behaviors on individuals and organizations. It will also provide a method for assessing future interventions. The instrument has a potential future value to VA. It may provide VA with insights into the types of aggressive behaviors that could potentially lead to future formal complaints, claims, grievance, and incident reports.   Some of the interventions being developed and tested as a result of the project and data the questionnaire helped to collect may help VA identify strategies and interventions that could help deal with problems and issues before they go formal.

Using Local Action Teams to Act on Data

The project uses local action teams and a questioning and reflection process that helps the teams to question assumptions and assess the context they are working in and the progress they are making.

The project has developed and used the following general process, which several organizations in VA are using as a model to work with the 2001 VA Employee Satisfaction Survey results.

THE GENERAL PROCESS THE PROJECT USED FOR LOCAL ACTION TEAMS

While this process relates to the Workplace Stress and Aggression Project, it can be used anytime you need to work with data and take action upon these data.

1. Facilities volunteered to join the project after the Project Team briefed them on the project's **objectives.** *Both Management and the Union had to agree to participate.*

2. Management and the Union selected Action Team Members using the following criteria:
- Credibility with employees and leadership
- High potential for success
- Action- Oriented
- Varied Backgrounds
- Committed to Learning
- Good Communication Skills

(In addition to the skills the Project Team identified when we began the project, we would now suggest to an organization starting an action team to add someone to the team who has data analysis skills. It would also help to add someone who also has an understanding of change management.)

3. The Action Teams received training on:
- The way to ask questions about data they would receive; and
- The learning practices that would help them work and learn together.

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4. Each team had a learning coach and a team leader.

- The learning coach would help them review and apply the learning practices when necessary. The learning coach is not a facilitator, who controls the meetings. The learning coach is someone who allows the team to work, helps them learn from what they are doing, and provides support when necessary.
  (Having a learning coach on the team was problematic, since the initial design separated the coach from the work the team was performing. Some teams found that making the learning coach a part of the team was more natural.)
- The team leader helps the team stay organized and focused on the task at hand

5. The Action Teams provided the Project Team with input into the original survey.

6. The Action Teams prepared their facilities for the survey. The employee briefings on the survey were important.

7. The academic researchers received the completed surveys, maintained the survey data on the project, and provided results to the teams. We held a Special Conference tied to the release of initial data. After the conference, the researchers also responded to special requests from individual teams for additional data analysis.

8. The Action Teams analyzed data and briefed employees on the results. The general employee response to these briefings was positive, since they indicated this was one of the few times, or only times they had received feedback on a survey they had completed. In addition, the many of the teams used these briefings to allow the employees to explain why certain responses were made and to make sense of data. The employees often made suggestions for possible interventions that could address these concerns.

9. Based on an analysis of the survey data and other data they had gathered, the Action Teams identified, or are identifying interventions.

10. The Action Teams are implementing, helping to implement or monitoring interventions. The teams are in various stages of the analysis, identification, and implementation process.

11. The survey will be re-administered to help evaluate results.

Questioning and Learning

The teams received training in a variety of learning practices. As the illustration shows, the learning practices range from basic inquiry and reflection techniques through the Learning Window and the Harvesting the Learning practices. These are simple to learn, but require practice and application as the team works together

Using a Variety of Learning Practices
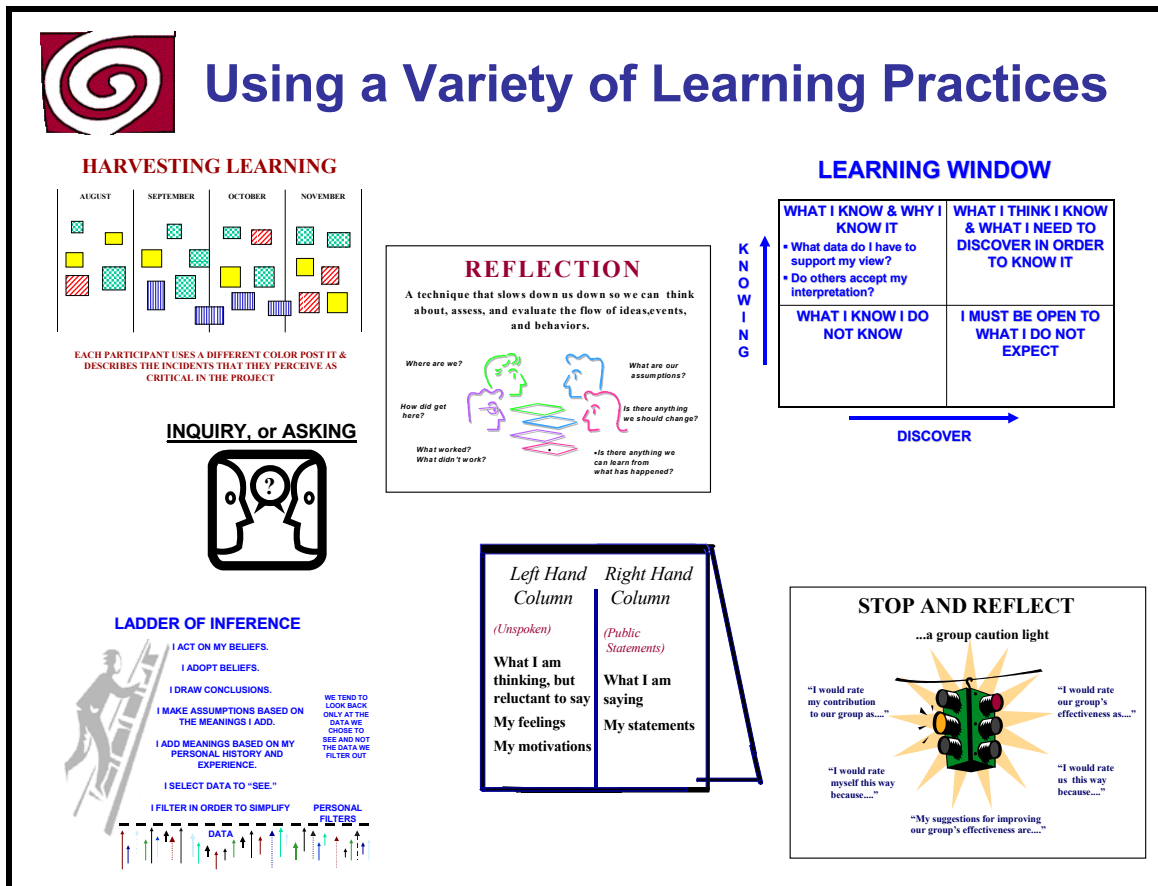
The Workplace Stress and Aggression Project has issued _**Learning Practices: A Guide for Action Teams**_, which is available on the project's Intranet site. This guide provides a description of the inquiry or questioning process and describes a variety of simple learning practices that can help a team work with data and become more conscious of the team's process and how the team learns together.
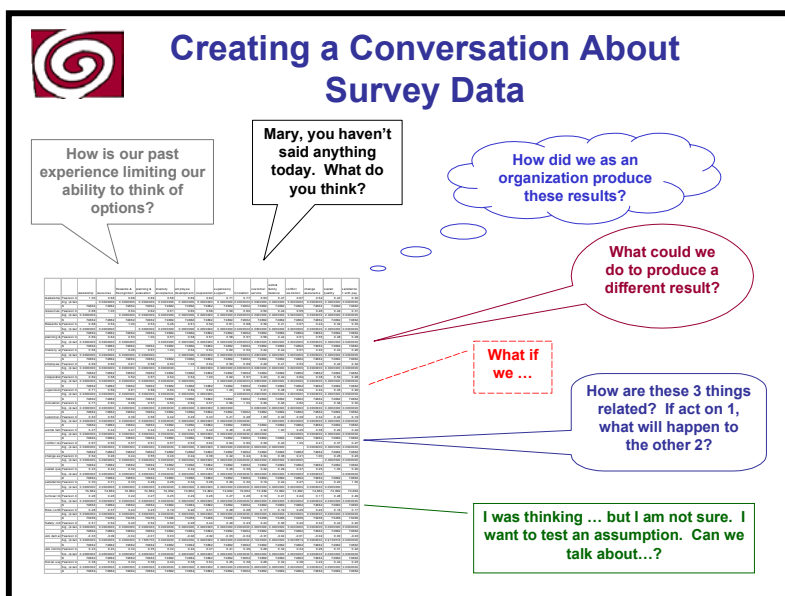
The practices help the team test assumptions, a practice that is very fundamental to research, but which you can apply and use as part of a practical problem solving or decision-making process. In a way, the inquiry process, the way you test assumptions, is an important link between the world of academic research and the practical business world.

At a very fundamental level, making sense of the survey results, that is having conversations about what the survey data means to those at the site, was a key intervention. These conversations allowed the Action Team to test assumptions and helped the team to distinguish what it knows based on verifiable data, from what the team thinks it knows based on the team's experience, feelings and beliefs. Helping to change a conversation is an important action and not a discussion that wastes time or delays taking action

There are also a number of tools and techniques that you can use to understand and collect more data. The project has found that while many are comfortable with quantitative data, many undervalue or overlook the value, validity and importance of qualitative data. The Workplace Stress and Aggression Project has also developed a second guide, _Inquiry and Data: A Guide for Action Team_s that is also available on its Intranet site. In addition to a discussion of quantitative data, there is a section that focuses solely on methods for collecting qualitative data.

Questions

- Why did the Action Teams adopt certain learning practices more than others?

ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE PILOT SITES

An intervention that would increase employee satisfaction VA wide would result in reduced aggression and stress and improved organizational performance. While we do not know the one "magic" intervention that would improve employee satisfaction across VA, we do know that the most effective interventions are in the area of work climate. We also know that providing facility action teams with an inquiry and after action review process and allowing them to apply this process locally to their facility-specific work climate issues, are important. They are powerful ways to leverage resources to attack serious workplace issues and improve organizational performance and service to veterans.

The following table provides examples of the interventions, or actions implemented at the pilot sites. Please refer to Appendix E for more information.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Survey Preparations	All of the pilot sites. The teams conducted briefings that explained the survey's purpose and the project's objectives. The teams also used a variety of communication methods to re-enforce their message. These included newsletters, fliers, emails and bulletin board displays.
Inquiry into Data	All of the pilot sites. While some of the teams did rather sophisticated data analysis, the fact that employees on the team learned to asked questions about data and to ask questions to test the assumptions and thinking of their team members was a common theme and practice across the Actions Teams. The teams adapted the learning practices to fit their situation. The conversations they had over time about data provided the basis for selecting actions to take at the site.
Informing Employees of Survey Results	All of the pilot sites The Action Teams briefed employees about the results of the survey. They not only talked about the overall results of the survey but about data specific to their sites.
Questioning Employees at the Site about Data	During the presentations about survey results, the Action Team members often used the opportunity to ask employees what they thought data meant. This took the form of mini-surveys or a discussion format. Some of the teams consciously used the Learning Window to help identify those things people knew based on data and those things that they thought they knew, but needed more information to test their thinking. (See the Houston National Cemetery, Fargo VA Medical Center and Regional Office)

| ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Connecting Employees with Each Other and Providing Ways to Raise Concerns and Issues	Several sites focused upon how the workforce lacked the opportunity to interact. This was especially true at the sites that had experienced hiring and had identified a split between the "old timers" and the "new timers." Teams also found that with restructuring and consolidations old connections were broken and there was confusion and ambiguity about reporting structures and communication lines. Communication breakdowns, misinformation, and the growth of rumors resulted. Several teams focused on ways to have employees raise problems and concerns early, or to have groups of employees from across the facility that generally had little chance for interaction to meet informally. Teams started newsletters (Houston National Cemetery, the Chicago Regional Office, Milwaukee Regional Office, Sioux Falls Medical Center and Regional Office).
Bringing Fun into the Workplace	Several sites became involved with the FISH intervention, which focuses on improving the workplace though fun and developing a positive attitude (For more information, see FISH! written by Stephen C. Lundin, Harry Paul and John Christensen). The teams felt it would reduce stress in the workplace, improve interaction within groups and encourage positive behaviors. Methods of implementation varied depending upon the work units and the needs of the work unit involved. (Black Hills Health Care system, St. Cloud Medical Center, Fargo VA Regional Office/Medical Center). Another site sponsored one event to bring fun in the workplace to help improve interactions and reduce stress; the team plans to conduct such events quarterly. (Sioux Falls)
Providing Information about Selections for Positions	Because of a need to improve communications between selecting officials and employees, an Action Team helped implement a system for providing feedback to employees who were not selected for positions. (Phoenix Regional Office)
Improving Programs to Recognize Accomplishments and Reward Performance	Fairness was an issue that came up at several sites. In this area, the incentive awards program was an area that some of the teams identified as needing attention. (Black Hills and Sioux Falls)
Improve Supervisory/ Leadership Development	The survey data indicated that supervisors had an impact on the workforce. Several teams, as they worked with the inquiry and reflection process, indicated that supervisors could benefit from not only learning more about stress and aggression, but how the inquiry process could help them deal with workplace issues. (Black Hills, Sioux Falls)
Evaluation of interventions	Several teams spent a great deal of time developing their business case and determining their measures of success. In one case, in addition to identifying quantitative measures, a team used regularly scheduled visits to a ward to see how things were going. These visits provided qualitative data on the intervention. (St. Cloud, Sioux Falls)

Questions

- Are the interventions tied to business results?

- Why do the teams appear to place more value on quantitative results (e.g., survey data) than upon qualitative results (e.g., interviews)? What can be done to encourage the use of qualitative and quantitative results in the evaluation process?

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE PROCESS

The site visits have helped define the key themes and issues of the process and about the evolving relationship between the Project Team and the Action team. The following map is a product of the site visits and what we have learned so far.
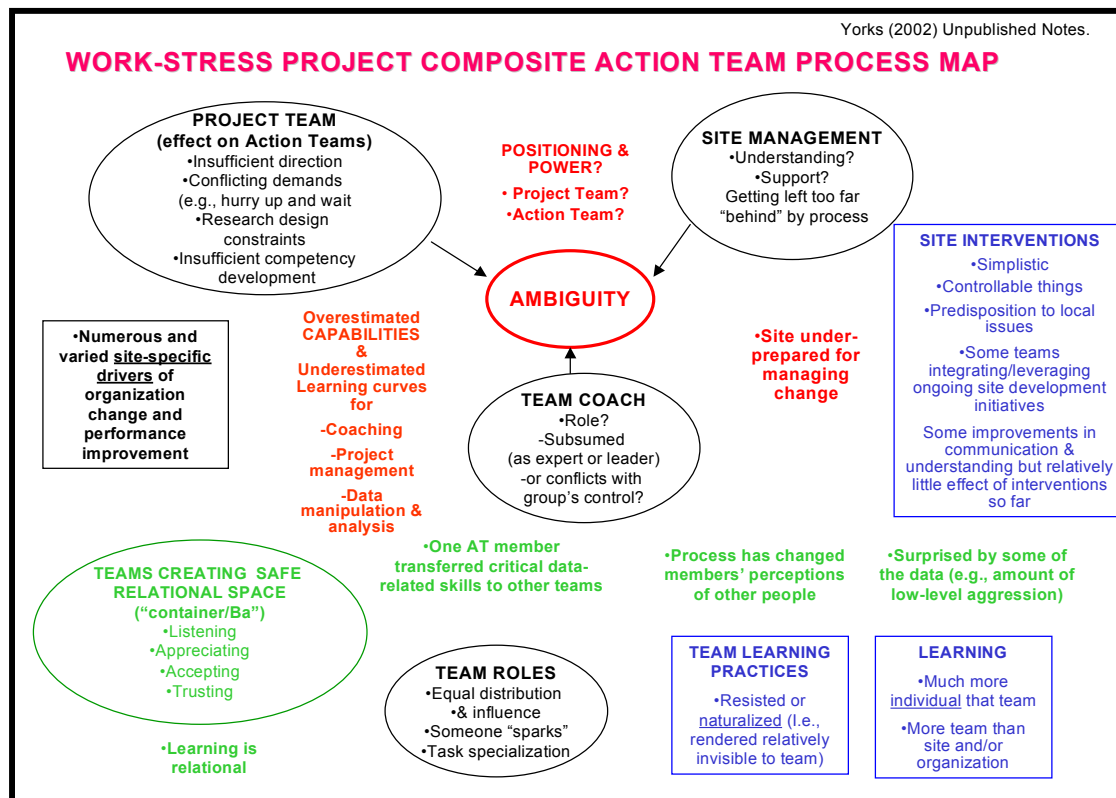
1. **Ambiguity has surrounded the relationship between the Project Team and the Action Teams, the Action Teams and Site Management, and the Action Teams and the Learning Coaches.**

   The Project Team initially provided insufficient directions and made conflicting demands on the teams. The change in the research design (from a traditional research model to an action research model) may have helped this to happen. In addition, the Project Team underestimated the time it would take to develop the skills needed for data analysis and for using the learning practices.

   The project did not actively involve site leadership in the process. As the teams moved into an inquiry process, leadership may not have sufficiently understood, or had explained to them by the Project Team, the difference between inquiry and process improvement, or between the Action Teams and other committees with which the Directors were familiar.

The Learning Coaches' role on the team was also unclear and artificial. As the teams progressed and became more comfortable with the questioning process, they generally became more involved in the team and its work.

2. **We underestimated the learning curves for coaching, project management, and data analysis.**

The teams had employees from a variety of backgrounds. The questioning process was different than the processes other teams such as process improvement teams had used.

3. **Interventions are in their early stages.**

The interventions are generally still at an early stage. While they did start with more simple and controllable actions, the teams are leveraging and integrating change initiatives at their sites for their interventions. There is improvement of communications at the site, but for the most part, it is too early to see an impact of the interventions at the sites.

4. **The teams have created a safe place for questioning and for working together**.

The teams have adapted the learning practices to the way the team members work together. Through the way in which the team members test assumptions and have learned to accept different points of view, the teams have an environment in which the team members have gotten to know each other and to trust and accept each other. Many have commented that they are now working together differently and that they interact with each other in a more open manner. They have learned to ask questions and test what they are hearing.

5. **The teams and the sites, found these data, in some respects, surprising.**

The teams and others who have seen project presentations have indicated being surprised about the amount of low-level aggression occurring in the workplace.

6. **In some instances, team members have used inquiry and the learning practices in other groups in their facilities.**

Some team members have indicated that they have started using inquiry and the learning practices in other groups. This is an indication that they are able to apply what they have learned, but that the project's practices may be starting to transfer to other groups within the facilities.

Questions

- How can action inquiry promote a learning culture within VA?

- What factors within VA facilitate and inhibit learning at the individual, team and organizational levels?

- What processes facilitate transfer of learning across organizational boundaries (from one site to another, one team to another)?

- To what extent does stress and aggression affect learning?

- What impact does the tension between the university researchers and the organization-based researchers have upon the nature of the partnership? (E.g., the tendency of academics to prefer careful analysis vs. the practitioners pre-disposition to act quickly?)

- To what extent have the actions of the Project Team reflected the organizational cultures? For example, has this impacted the way the Project Team recommended constituting the Action Teams?

- In what ways do the Project Team members enact new ways of acting, that are different from way the ways of acting within their own organizations?

THE FUTURE

- During Fiscal Year 2003, the Stress and Aggression in the Workplace Project will focus on evaluations. In November 2002, we will begin re-administering the survey to the pilot sites and comparison sites. The academic researchers will then provide the sites with the results so that they can assess what has happened.

- We plan to have a Feedback session for the Action Teams that will not only discuss results, but will also include discussions among the teams of their interventions and the results they achieved.

- As part of the evaluation process, the Project Team plans to conduct another round of site visits to help evaluate the project and to discuss possible future actions for the teams. Part of this discussion will focus on how to transfer what we have learned from the project within the facilities as well as to other organizations.

- In addition, we are preparing a video and satellite broadcast on the project that will discuss what the sites have done as well as illustrate how facilities can use local action teams to work with data.

- VHA's National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD) has suggested to the Networks that the process used in the project for working with data is one that they can use to work with the results of the VA Employee Satisfaction. As a result, members of the project are becoming involved in expanding the processes used in the project to other VA organizations.

- The Office of Resolution Management is also interested in assessing how well other sites that have a high number of complaints can use the project's techniques.

- The project will also issue a formal evaluation report on the project that will discuss what was learned from the project and how organizations can benefit from what took place in VA.

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

In addition to the Learning Guides that we developed for the action teams, we have placed information on the project on our Websites.

Internet: http://www.va.gov/valu
Intranet: http://vaww.va.gov/valu

The project also has a community board that provides a way for the teams to communicate with each other and with the Project Team. It is a way to share information on stress and aggression in the workplace as well as on learning practices.

Members of the Project Team have also done presentations and briefings for other organizations. These presentations, particularly those to the Academy of Management and to the Society of Organizational Learning have provided the Project Team members with the opportunity to have other researchers critique and provide input into and suggestions for the project. These professional interactions have provided the project with a sounding board and with suggestions that have helped improve the project. Please refer to Appendix F for specific information.

The questions that the project has raised have helped to redirect the project and to hopefully generate new learning and knowledge. Appendix G contains a list of the questions found in this report and some of the other questions that we have developed through our conversations over time. The questions are how we discover the things that we don't know that can make a difference in the service we provide veterans and their families. Questions also help us to find new ways to improve the workplace itself and the relationships among its members and the larger communities with which they interact.

APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANTS

THE PROJECT TEAM manages and directs the project through such things as establishing timetables, identifying critical events, monitoring progress, evaluating and assessing accomplishments, sharing practices and results and providing the teams with support.

PROJECT TEAM NETWORK (SEPTEMBER 2002)

VA Office of Occupational Safety and Health - Jim Scaringi
Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Acting Director, Network 23 - Robert Petzel
Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) - Rita Kowalski
VA Office of Resolution Management - Odessa Johnson
VHA HRM Group - Dan Kowalski
*Teachers College, Columbia University - Lyle Yorks
*Wayne State University - Loraleigh Keashly
*State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz - Joel Neuman
*Fairleigh Dickinson University - Joel Harmon
VHA, Chicago Health Care System - Michelle Blakely
VHA Employee Education System (EES) Network 23 - Bridget Cannon
National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Field Operations - Robert Kline
VHA VISN 23 Education Office -Gene Mickelson
VBA, Office of Human Resources Management - Jennifer Long
Office of Human Resources Management - Ellen Kollar
National VA Council AFGE - Oscar Williams
National VA Council AFGE - Anthony McCray
National VA Council AFGE - Patrick Russell
VBA AFGE - Barbara Cook

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* UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

Department of Organization and Leadership, Teachers College, Columbia University - New York, New York

> *Dr. Lyle Yorks has developed models for "action learning" and "after action review" which the U.S. Army uses extensively.*

Center for Human Resource Management Studies, Fairleigh Dickinson University - Madison, New Jersey

> *Dr. Joel Harmon has worked in causal modeling and linking organizational results to behaviors.*

Center of Applied Management, School of Business, State University of New York at New Paltz - New Paltz, New York

> *Dr. Joel Neuman has worked to show the impact of low-level workplace aggression upon organizational performance.*

College of Urban, Labor, and Metropolitan Affairs, Wayne State University - Detroit, Michigan

> *Dr. Loraleigh Keashly, Academic Director of the Masters Program for Dispute Resolution, has accomplished work showing the impact of emotional abuse upon employees and organizations.*

THE ACTION TEAMS are actively participating in all phases of the project including the survey, the inquiry process, coaching and interventions.

ACTION TEAMS (June 2002)

VHA Black Hills
Martin Andersen
Gloria Baker
Renee Call
Herb Doering
Mic Layton
Kathy Maynard
Tari McClung
Patrick Russell
Arlie Schumacher
Alan Stade
Paula Whetzal

NCA Houston
Linda Barry
Leroy Grimes
Leonard Manos
David Sosa
Melody Hardwick
Abe Stice

VBA Milwaukee
Herbert Frison
Walter Groth
Diane Hoefs
Don Hurley
Diane McCollian

VBA Phoenix
Karen Beasley
Teri Daly
Pat Driscoll
Gary Frandino
Maria Parker
Elaine Tilghman

VHA Minneapolis
Susan Behr
Curt Carlson
Neil Falkner
David Johnson
Tina Lund
William McAmis
Jane Nygaard
Jeanne Porrazzo-Carroll
George Rankin
Tina Lund
William McAmis
Jane Nygaard
Jeanne Porrazzo-Carroll
George Rankin

VBA Chicago
Floretta Buford
Dean Bundley
Carol Copeland
Albert Falasz
Joyce Kelly
Paulette Loveless
Michael Olson
Arthur Peals

VBA Des Moines
John Powell
Greg Reed
Larry Reynolds

VHA St. Cloud
Rich Chavez
Clay King
John Demotts
Diane Kroll
Cathy Town
Rick Witte

VAMROC Fargo*
Debra Cederholm
Mark Fowler
Deb Howland
Jack Klugh
Patricia Triebert
Carol Winter
Carol Winter

*The team was suspended, when AFGE Local 3884 withdrew from the project.

AFGE believed the team was not being permitted to function as intended.

VBA St. Paul
Catherine Crews
Keith Hendricks
William Nygaard

Anna Woltier

VAMROC Sioux Falls
Stan Christopherson
Marcia Johnson
George Larson
Teri Nyhaug
Marjorie Remacle-Taylor
Marcia Johnson

THE COMPARISON SITES are the facilities that only take the survey. While they do get the results of the survey, they are not participating in the other aspects of the project, which include such things as training for the teams, coaching, and interventions that the project is implementing and evaluating. The comparison sites help the project evaluate the impact of the interventions at the pilot sites.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Atlanta Regional Office
Detroit Regional Office
Louisville Regional Office
Montgomery Regional Office
Pittsburgh Regional Office
Wilmington Regional Office
White River Junction Regional Office

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Boise Medical Center
Coatesville Medical Center
Manchester Medical Center
Portland Medical Center
Spokane Medical Center
Togus Medical Center

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

Massachusetts National Cemetery
San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery

APPENDIX B - CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

February 1999	The interested individuals met at Fairleigh Dickinson University to discuss beginning a research project to study stress and aggression in the workplace. Attending the meeting were representatives from VA as well as from Fairleigh Dickinson University, Wayne State University and the Sate University of New York at New Paltz.
July 1999	Some of the Project Team held its second planning meeting at Fairleigh Dickinson University. At the meeting the team discussed and outlined a project plan. VA participants also familiarized the academics with available VA databases.
August 1999	Members of the Project Team attended the Practitioners Series at the Academy of Management Conference. Based on feedback from the group, the project evolved from a traditional research project using an expert model to an action research model having academics and practitioners working together as co-researchers.
December 1999	The Project Team held a meeting to continue planning the project and brought together information that the team had gathered for the project.
January 2000	A Sub-group of the Project team met to work on the National Science Foundation grant. Teachers College, Columbia University joined the group to help develop the grant proposal.

January – February 2000	The Project Team enrolled the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration.
	The Project Team submitted grant proposal to the National Science Foundation
	The Project Team briefed the facility Directors and Union Presidents from VHA Network 13, VBA Service Delivery Network 6, the VBA Phoenix Regional Office, NCA Houston National Cemetery, and Project Team.
March - April 2000	Eleven pilot sites enrolled in project. Each site selected a local Action Team according to the selection process that the Project team developed.
April 2000	The Project Team held a planning session for the Action Team development conferences.
June- July 2000	The Project team trained and prepared all Action Teams and Learning Coaches (approximately 75 individuals from pilot sites) to participate on the project.
July 2000	The Project team conducted a planning session that included preparing for the September Conference for the Action Teams. Project team-planning session.
August 2000	The National Science Foundation awarded a three-year grant to the project.
	The Project Team made a presentation on the project's development at the Academy of Management Conference and received feedback on the project's structure.

August 2000-October 2000	The researchers analyzed results of the One VA Survey and productivity data from several VA databases. Developed the project survey.
September 2000	The Project Team conducted a conference for the Action Team representatives in Phoenix, Arizona for approximately 40 individuals to strengthen project structure and field test survey.
October – November 2000	The Project Team finalized survey and survey administration procedures. Local Action teams prepared sites for the survey administration. They conducted briefings on the project and discussed survey procedures.
November 2000	The Project Team distributed the surveys to the sites. The Action Teams distributed the survey to 6,000 employees at the pilot sites.
January 2001	The Project Team held a planning session for the February 2001 conference. During this conference, the teams would received survey feedback and begin work on their action plans. The Project Team conducted a Planning meeting to develop a project plan for year 2 and to continue planning the February conference. The university researchers (4 primary researchers and 6 to 8 assistants) did preliminary data analysis. The Project Team developed presentations for the action team conference
February 2001	The Project Team conducted a conference in San Antonio, Texas, for the action teams. Approximately 100 people attended. During the conference, the action teams reviewed survey results and developed action plans based on data.

March – June 2001	The university researchers analyzed data and built causal models for pilot sites.
April 2001	The Project Team and the administrations identified and briefed comparability sites on the project.
May – July 2001	The Project Team contracted for, distributed and administered the survey to the comparability sites.
March – June 2001	Several Project Team members traveled to the pilot sites to work with the Action Teams on engaging leadership and developing the business case for interventions. In addition, they discussed acting on survey results - (11 facilities)
March – December 2001	The Project Team developed a template to show how organizations can collaboratively use their own data to generate learning
June 2001	The Project Team and Learning Coaches met in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Action Teams received causal models and training on how to use them to guide selection of interventions.
June – September 2001	The Project Team developed a Business Case Template for teams to document intervention process.
July 2001-August 2001	The Action Teams selected, developed and implemented interventions to be tested.
August 2001	The Black Hills Healthcare System Action team participated in the Practitioners Series at the Academy of Management. The Project team also presented a symposium at the conference.

October 2001	The Project Team held a planning meeting. The project established the Knowledge Transfer Consortium to assist Project Team in developing lessons learned for sharing with all VA
January – May 2002	Sub-groups of the Project Team met to work on specific project initiatives. These included planning the site visits, the Community Board and Intranet/Internet sites, and project spin-offs across VA.
January-September 2002	Researchers (both university-based and organization-based) traveled to the pilot sites to collect data through interviews to determine what impact the teams are having at their facilities. The site visit team conducted a feedback session with the Action Team to discuss results and discuss next steps. The site visit team and the Action Team then met with the Director and Union President to discuss findings and possible next steps.
April 2002	Members of the Project Team began work on a video about the project and how the action teams act on survey results.
May 2002	The Project Team established the community board for the project. The Project Team conducted a conference in Minneapolis for facility directors at all pilot sites for project update and demonstration on how to use project findings and models to improve business results
May 2002 – October 2002	Project team members participated in the VHA calls that the VHA National Center for Organizational Development conducted for each Network. These calls discuss the VA Employee Satisfaction results for the Network and used the Stress and Aggression in the Workplace Project as a model to use for setting up local action teams to work with and inquire into the survey results.

June 2002	The project issued <u>Learning Practices: A Guide for Action Teams</u> that outlines learning practices for that team can use.
September 2002	The project's Intranet/Internet Website opened.
October 2002	The project issued <u>Inquiry and Data: A Guide for Action Teams</u> that discusses data, methods for collecting data and how to collect data. The Action Team in Fargo was suspended, when AFGE Local 3884 withdrew from the project. AFGE believed the team was not being permitted to function as intended.

APPENDIX C – THE SIX TYPES OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Aggressive behaviors fall into six categories. Aggressive acts can be:

- Physical, or Verbal,
- Active, or Passive, and
- Direct, or Indirect.

The aggressive behaviors range from low-level aggression such as not returning phone call and not being given credit for work you have performed to very high-level aggression such as being punched, kicked or assaulted. The following table provides some examples of each of the six categories of aggressive behaviors.

PHYSICAL	VERBAL
− Pushing or shoving − Hitting, kicking − Unwanted touching − Assaulting − Glaring − Making Obscene Gestures − Defacing Property − Stealing − Being late for meetings	− Yelling, shouting − Harshly criticizing − Being rude and disrespectful − Making negative comments − Making false accusations − Temper tantrums − Making sexist remarks − Making threats − Being told how to spend personal time
ACTIVE	PASSIVE
− Being subjected to mean pranks − Lied to − Blamed for the mistakes of others − Punched − Yelled at − Subjected to racial or ethnic slurs	− Excluded from social gatherings − Being given the "silent treatment" − Others refused your requests for help − Others failed to give you information you needed − Shown little sympathy when having trouble.
DIRECT	INDIRECT
− Not give credit − Threatened − Prevented from expressing yourself (e.g. being interrupted when talking) − "Put Down" in front of others − Assaulted − Notes left to embarrass you	− Your personal property defaced − Target of rumors − Others fail to take action to protect you from harm − Co-workers fail to defend your − Others turned against you

APPENDIX D –THE CONTEXT

Between January and September 2002, a team visited the pilot sites to interview the Action Team members, the Directors and the Union Presidents about the project and the facility. The site visit team consisted of members of the Project Team and in some later instances members of VHA's National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD) and a Graduate Assistant from Teachers College, Columbia University.
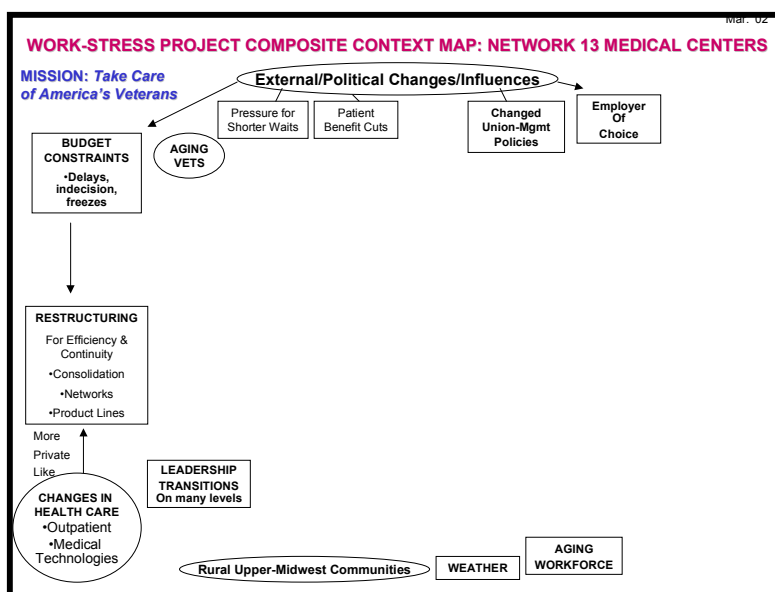
Site Visit Team Members

Lyle Yorks	Teacher's College Columbia University
Joel Harmon	Fairleigh Dickinson University
Rita Kowalski	Veterans Benefits Administration
Daniel Kowalski	VHA HRM Group
Janet Reid-Hector	Graduate Assistant, Teachers College, Columbia University
Susan R. Dyrenforth.	VHA NCOD
Joey Collins.	VHA NCOD
Jeremy Rickert	VHA NCOD

After interviewing each Action Team member privately, the interviewers worked with the team members to create a visual map capturing key aspects of the unique context in which they were operating (and that they were trying to change in some positive ways). These context maps purely represent the "story" of how the action teams experience their facilities, regional offices or cemetery, not the project team's interpretation. The maps provide a key to what the Action Teams can influence at the sites.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

What were the common story elements of the old Network 13 medical facilities that the interview team visited?
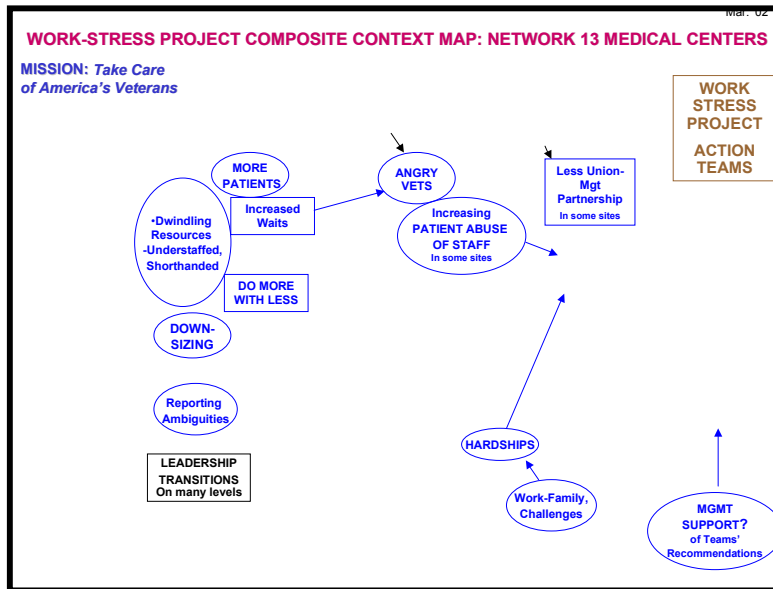
The Medical Centers mission, in the face of increasing stress caused by externally created factors, is very clear - "taking care of veterans." Political changes, budget constraints, restructuring, and changes in healthcare were affecting the site. In addition, VA union-management partnership-eroding changes, and a push

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: NETWORK 13 MEDICAL CENTERS

MISSION: Take Care of America's Veterans

External/Political Changes/Influences

Pressure for Shorter Waits · Patient Benefit Cuts · Changed Union-Mgmt Policies · Employer Of Choice

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS · Delays, indecision, freezes

AGING VETS

RESTRUCTURING For Efficiency & Continuity · Consolidation · Networks · Product Lines

More Private Like

CHANGES IN HEALTH CARE · Outpatient · Medical Technologies

LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS On many levels

Rural Upper-Midwest Communities · WEATHER · AGING WORKFORCE

to become an "employer of choice" also were seen as important context factors. The Action Teams at the facilities had very little influence over these external factors. Aging workforce, harsh weather, and nine-11 were additional stress-producing factors. .
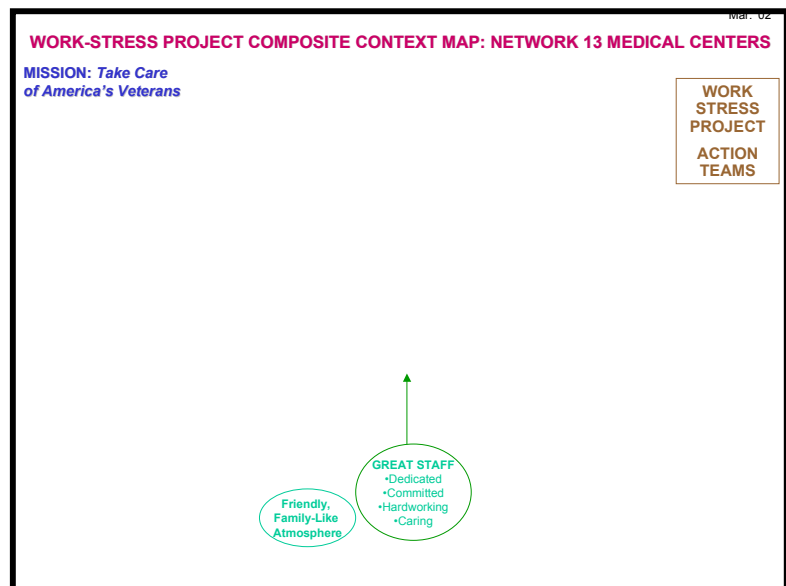
These external forces did create site-specific experiences for the employees at these medical centers. There are common elements of these experiences across the sites that the composite map depicts.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: NETWORK 13 MEDICAL CENTERS

MISSION: *Take Care of America's Veterans*

WORK STRESS PROJECT ACTION TEAMS

MORE PATIENTS · Increased Waits · ANGRY VETS · Less Union-Mgt Partnership In some sites · •Dwindling Resources -Understaffed, Shorthanded · Increasing PATIENT ABUSE OF STAFF In some sites · DO MORE WITH LESS · DOWN-SIZING · Reporting Ambiguities · HARDSHIPS · LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS On many levels · Work-Family, Challenges · MGMT SUPPORT? of Teams' Recommendations

For example, an aging veteran population was confronting them with more patients. At the same time increasing (and often unpredictable) budgetary pressures, were leaving them with perceptions that the facilities were understaffed and under-resourced. This combined to lengthen wait times and put pressure on employees to somehow do more with less.

One result, when combined with patient benefit cuts, was angrier veterans and increased abuse of staff, producing stress. On another front, major restructuring and leadership changes (caused both by changes in healthcare and budget pressures) were causing downsizing and changing the working and reporting relationships of the employees.

There were positives. Rural upper Midwest communities produced friendly, family-like atmospheres, and hardworking, caring and dedicated staffs.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: NETWORK 13 MEDICAL CENTERS

MISSION: *Take Care of America's Veterans*

WORK STRESS PROJECT ACTION TEAMS

GREAT STAFF •Dedicated •Committed •Hardworking •Caring

Friendly, Family-Like Atmosphere

Somewhat ironically, the strong commitment to veterans added to their frustration when the employees perceived that they lacked resources to deliver the level of services they felt veterans deserved. The result was confusion, insecurity and distrust. Employees felt threatened and tense as they dealt with too much work and concerns that they could lose their jobs. As a consequence of these combined contextual factors, cooperation, teamwork, and morale seemed to be suffering, and absenteeism and turnover were increasing.
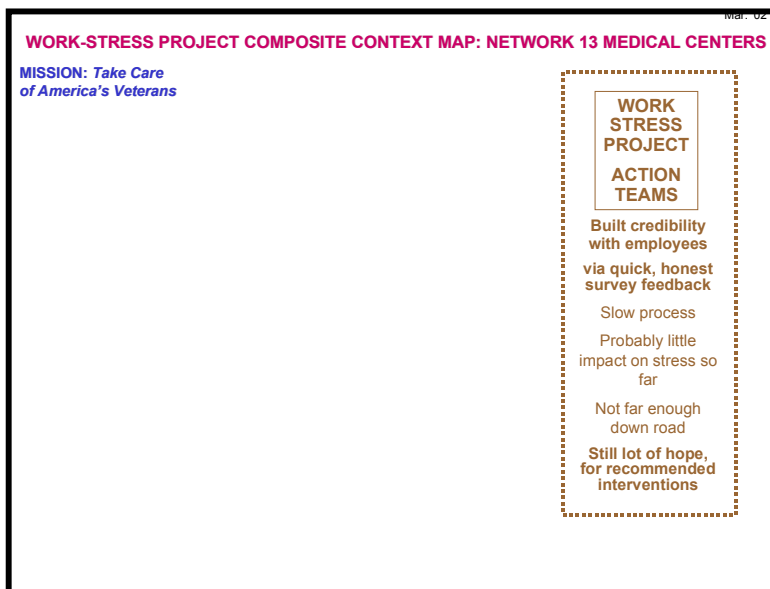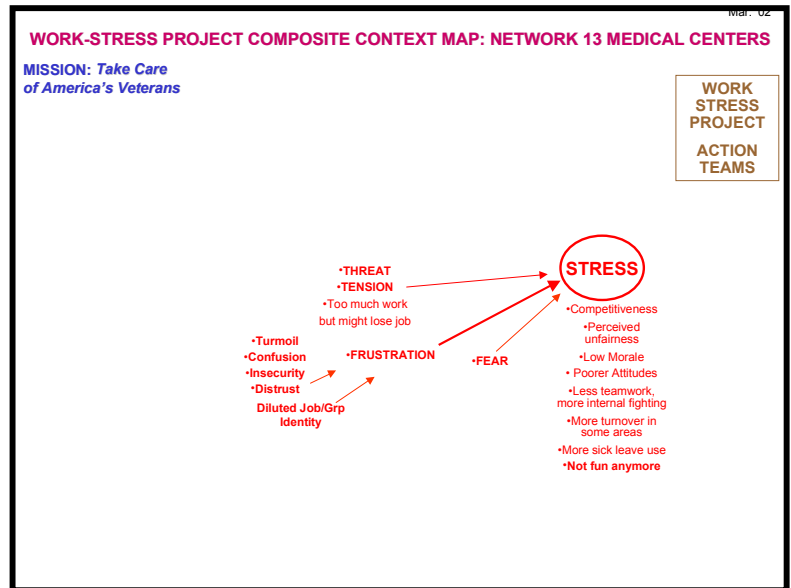

How did the action teams believe they were responding to these forces? The action teams believed they had built credibility with employees through their rapid and honest feedback of survey results. The action teams lamented the slow process of designing and implementing interventions.

They were hopeful that improvement would eventually be seen, but this depended upon how actively top management supported their recommendations.

When you put together the picture of the external forces affecting the sites, with the site's experiences of these forces, positives found at the site and the perceptions, feelings and beliefs these factors caused, the context map appears complex. This picture, developed through the interviews, depicts the world in which the Action Teams work. When the team members first saw the maps, they quickly understood them, since the maps use their own words.

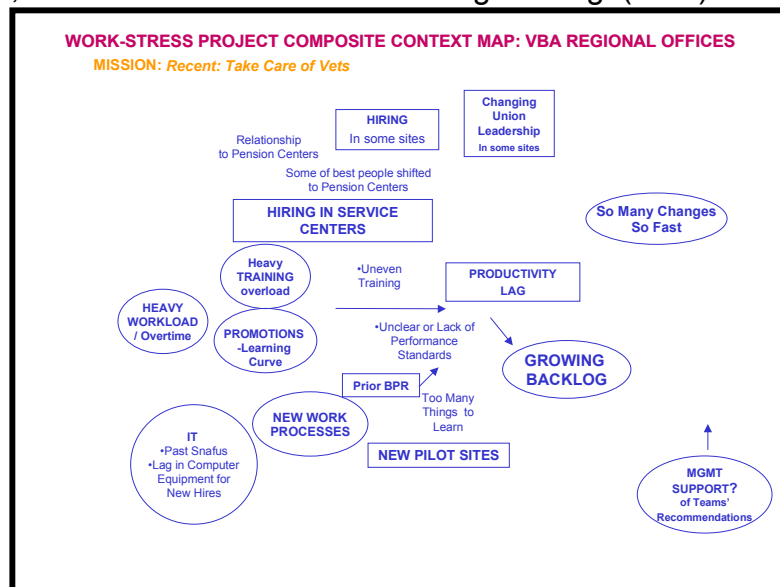WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: NETWORK 13 MEDICAL CENTERS
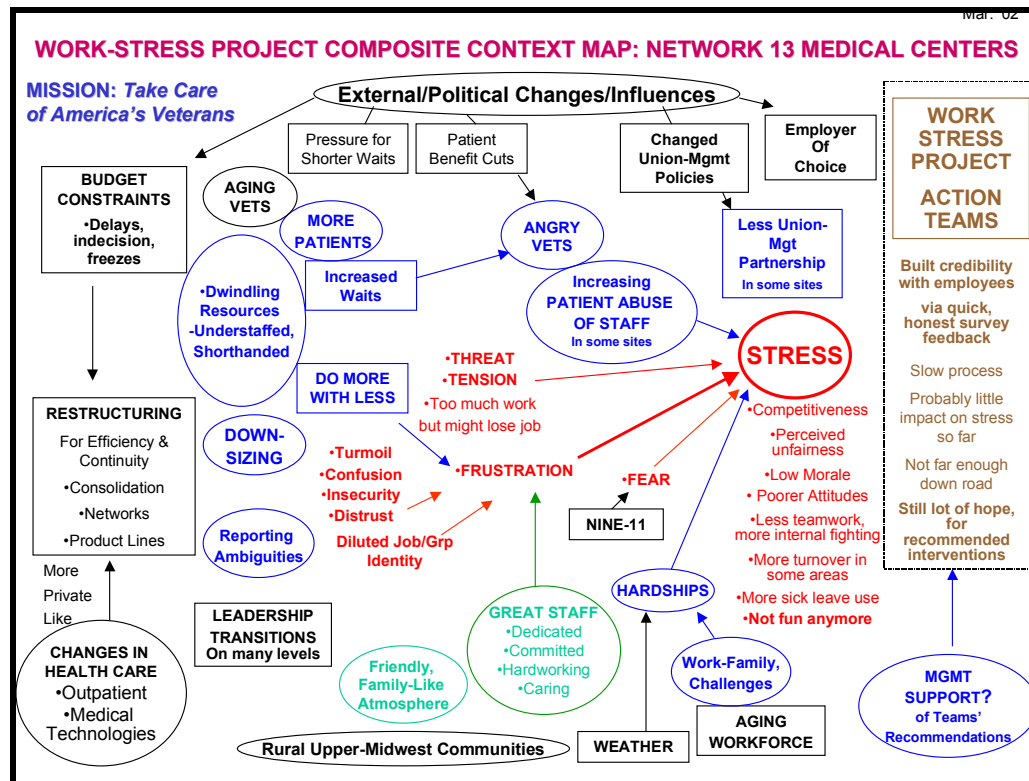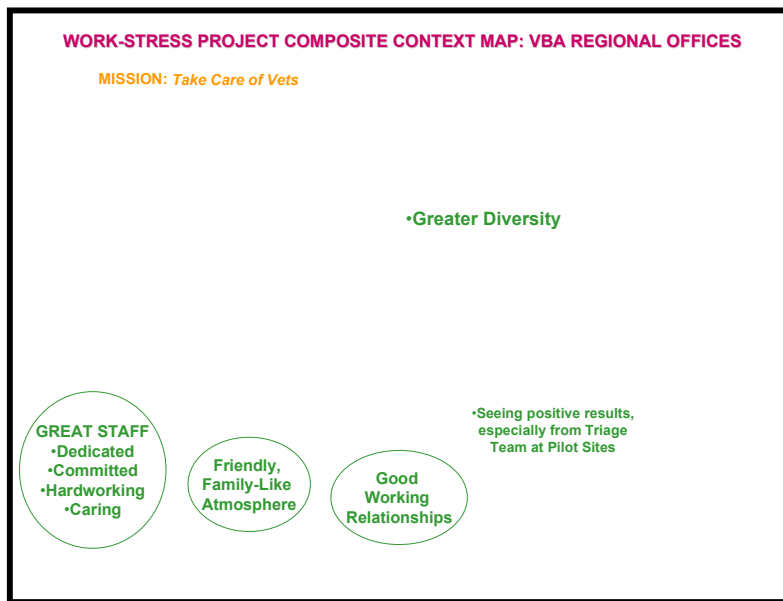
VETERAN BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

What were the common story elements of the Regional Offices that the site team visited? . The Action Teams discussed how employees were trying to serve the mission of "taking care of vets" in the face of increasing stress, in this case stemming from many rapid organizational changes and a growing backlog of claims.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES
MISSION: *Take Care of Vets*
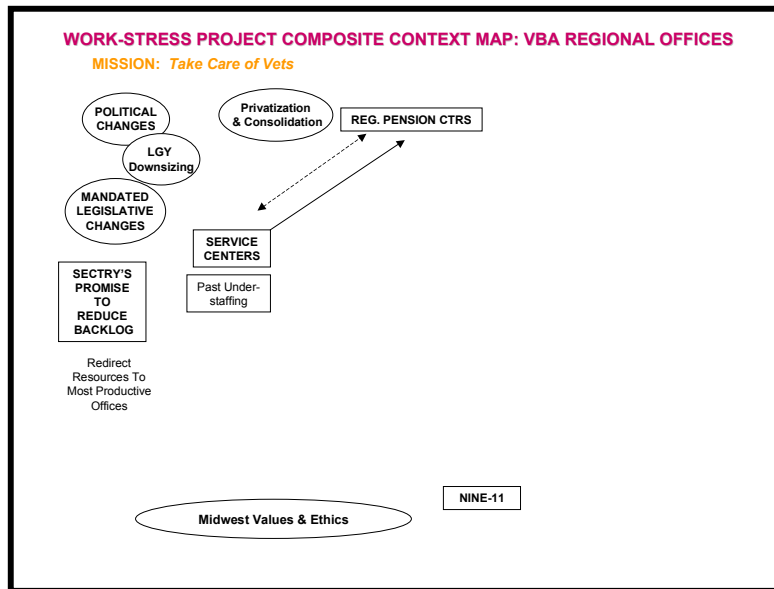
Again, these were rooted in a number of external factors (shown in black), such as political changes, legislative mandates, and pressures to privatize, consolidate, and reduce backlogs. Employees were experiencing downsizing in most of the Loan Guarantee operations.
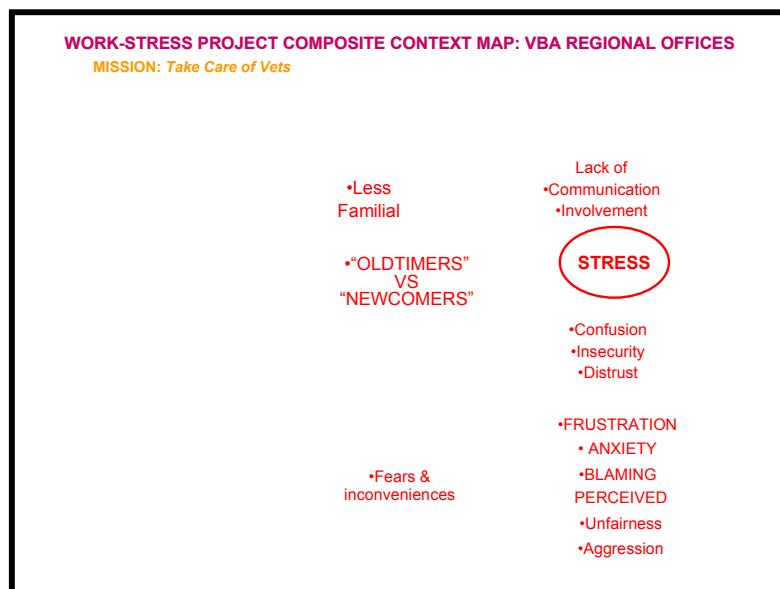
In the Service Centers, a combination of previous understaffing, Information technology (IT) problems, and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) work processes had caused large backlogs and heavy workloads for employees. It was hoped that a large influx of new hires would help address these issues. However, in the short term, training and supervisory learning curves were generating confusion, causing productivity lags, and actually worsening backlogs. In one site, additional hiring and

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES
MISSION: *Recent: Take Care of Vets*

disruptions were being caused by the rapid expansion of its Pension Center as a regional center.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES

MISSION: *Take Care of Vets*

•Greater Diversity

GREAT STAFF
•Dedicated
•Committed
•Hardworking
•Caring

Friendly,
Family-Like
Atmosphere

Good
Working
Relationships

•Seeing positive results,
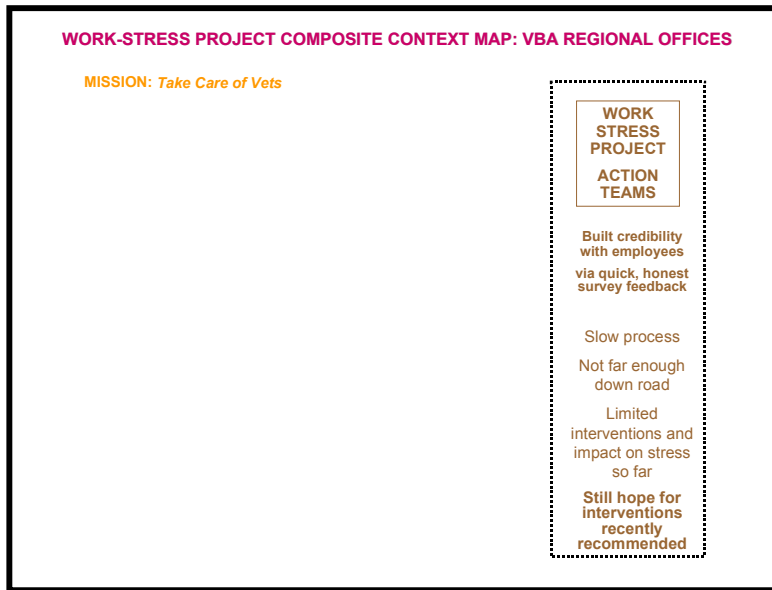especially from Triage
Team at Pilot Sites

Among the positives seen in the context were new work processes that were being piloted in some of the service centers, and Midwest values and ethics reflected in friendly, family-like work atmospheres, and hardworking, caring and dedicated staffs.

The influx of new hires was bringing appreciated diversity, also was seen as diluting the familial climate somewhat and generating "old timer-newcomer" splits. The sheer number of changes in structure, processes, and leadership, too often made with insufficient communication and employee involvement, plus nine-11 fears and inconvenience, were generating considerable anxiety, frustration, and stress. As a consequence, trust and sense of fairness seemed to be eroding and aggressive behavior seemed to be increasing.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES
MISSION: *Take Care of Vets*

•Less
Familial

Lack of
•Communication
•Involvement

•"OLDTIMERS"
VS
"NEWCOMERS"

STRESS

•Confusion
•Insecurity
•Distrust

•FRUSTRATION
• ANXIETY
•BLAMING
PERCEIVED
•Unfairness
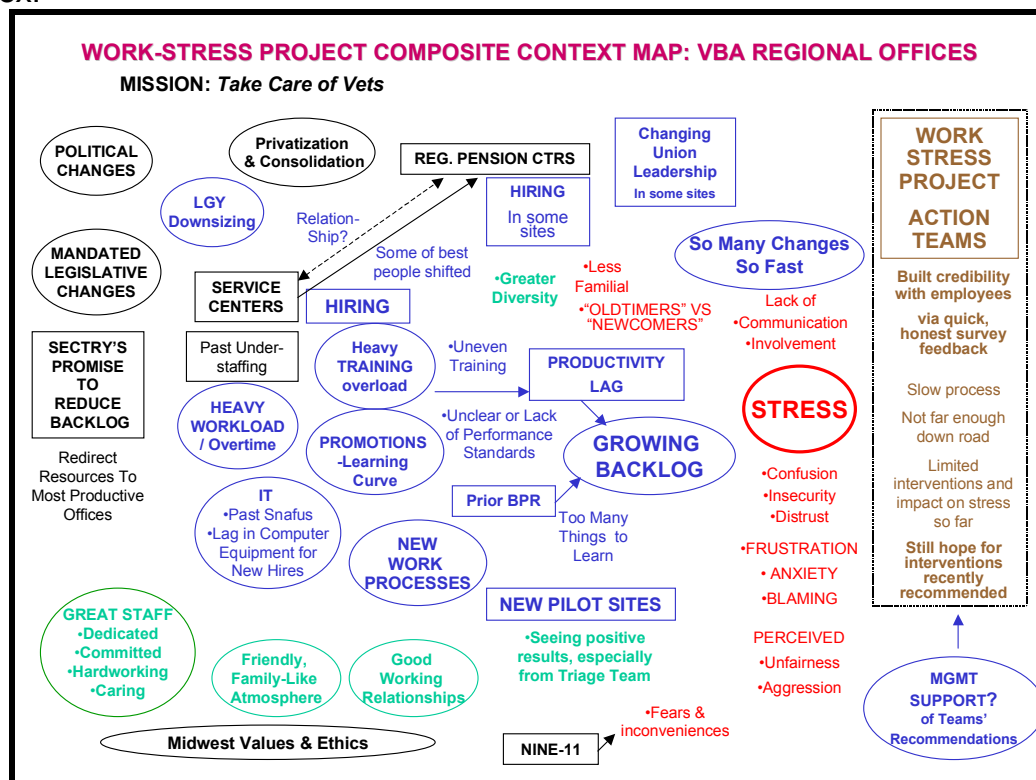•Aggression

•Fears &
inconveniences

The action teams believed they had built credibility with employees through their rapid and honest feedback of survey results. Again, the slow process of designing and implementing interventions concerned them

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES

MISSION: *Take Care of Vets*

WORK STRESS PROJECT ACTION TEAMS

Built credibility with employees

via quick, honest survey feedback

Slow process

Not far enough down road

Limited interventions and impact on stress so far

Still hope for interventions recently recommended

The action teams were hopeful that positive results eventually would be seen, but that depended upon on how actively top management supported their recommendations.

When you put together the picture of the external forces affecting the sites, with the site's experiences of these forces, positives found at the site and the perceptions, feelings and beliefs these factors caused, the context map appears complex.

WORK-STRESS PROJECT COMPOSITE CONTEXT MAP: VBA REGIONAL OFFICES

MISSION: *Take Care of Vets*

POLITICAL CHANGES

Privatization & Consolidation

REG. PENSION CTRS

Changing Union Leadership
In some sites

WORK STRESS PROJECT ACTION TEAMS

LGY Downsizing

Relation-Ship?

HIRING
In some sites

So Many Changes So Fast

Built credibility with employees

via quick, honest survey feedback

MANDATED LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Some of best people shifted

•Greater Diversity

•Less Familial

•"OLDTIMERS" VS "NEWCOMERS"

Lack of •Communication •Involvement

Slow process

Not far enough down road

SERVICE CENTERS

HIRING

SECTRY'S PROMISE TO REDUCE BACKLOG

Past Under-staffing

Heavy TRAINING overload

•Uneven Training

PRODUCTIVITY LAG

STRESS

Limited interventions and impact on stress so far

Redirect Resources To Most Productive Offices

HEAVY WORKLOAD / Overtime

PROMOTIONS -Learning Curve

•Unclear or Lack of Performance Standards

GROWING BACKLOG

•Confusion •Insecurity •Distrust

Still hope for interventions recently recommended

IT
•Past Snafus
•Lag in Computer Equipment for New Hires

Prior BPR

Too Many Things to Learn

•FRUSTRATION • ANXIETY •BLAMING

NEW WORK PROCESSES

GREAT STAFF
•Dedicated
•Committed
•Hardworking
•Caring

NEW PILOT SITES

PERCEIVED

•Unfairness

•Aggression

Friendly, Family-Like Atmosphere

Good Working Relationships

•Seeing positive results, especially from Triage Team

MGMT SUPPORT? of Teams' Recommendations

Midwest Values & Ethics

NINE-11

•Fears & inconveniences

This picture, developed through the interviews, depicts the world in which the Action Teams work. When the team members first saw the maps, they quickly understood the maps, since the maps use their own words.

APPENDIX E – THE ACTION TEAMS AND THEIR INTERVENTIONS

During the May 2002 Minneapolis Conference Action Team Representatives discussed the interventions that their sites were taking. In addition, the Directors from the Black Hills Heath Care System, the Chicago Regional Office, and the Houston National Cemetery provided their views of the interventions being taken at their sites.

THE ACTION TEAMS

The representatives from the Action Team discussed the interventions that their sites were taking. In addition, the Directors from the Black Hills Heath Care System, the Chicago Regional Office, and the Houston National Cemetery provided their views of the interventions being taken at their sites.

BLACK HILLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The Black Hills Action Team covers two sites: Fort Meade and Hot Springs. The team did present survey results to employees at both facilities. The major initiative involves FISH, which the team selected to reduce stress within work groups and improve interaction within the groups. (For more information about this intervention see FISH! written by Stephen C. Lundin, Harry Paul, and John Christensen.)The FISH intervention has taken off at Hot Springs. Because of the interest across the system, the Acton Team will sponsor a Train-the-Trainer session to help with the spread of the intervention.

To start the intervention, the Action Team showed FISH at Town Hall. The presentation excited the group. The team identified four groups to try the FISH philosophy. Gene Mickelson and Action team members trained these groups. Each group has implemented FISH is a different way. One group has a monthly luncheon with a theme, while another sends out a daily motivational email. Another technique used is a FISH pass for 59 minutes of leave time. Another group passes around a stuffed fish that goes to team members whenever they do something nice for someone else.

The Action Team let the rest of the system know what is happening. One month after launching FISH, the group comes to a town hall and the Director gives Bill Bass FISH to the team. The Action Team initially went to leadership about the first four teams and the Director has been supportive. The team has launched other groups and will be expanding this effort. The Action Team will be doing surveys about the effort to see if it is producing the work climate.

Joseph Dalpaiz, the Director, indicated that the Action Team provided a new way of working with the union. The site was able to take the practices learned through the project to other initiatives. Black Hills was facing tighter resources and had to make some organizational changes. The team has helped the site

address the issues and has provided a way to keep employees focused on the positive actions they could take. He mentioned changes in the reward system as an example.

CHICAGO REGIONAL OFFICE

The Action Team provided the employees with feedback on the survey's results. Their analysis had shown that communications was an area of concern. The office had brought in a large number of new employees while it was facing a greater workload. As a result of discussion that developed from these presentations, the Action Team helped institute regularly scheduled "Flake Offs." "Flake Off" was the name given to the meeting, where employees could go and leave their normal work to talk informally about issues concerning them. The Action Team members would nominate employees from across the office to attend. The Assistant Director, who was a team member, would then go to personally invite the employee to attend the "Flake Off " that he would run. The session was held in a conference room that had couches and chairs. The employee's participation was voluntary. The Assistant Director would also invite a veteran to come to the meeting to discuss his or her experiences in the meeting. The employees attending the meeting could bring up anything they wanted to discuss. The Assistant Director would then look into the issues and get back to the employee one-way or the other.

Although the Assistant Director retired, the Flake Offs have continued, since the Director is now conducting them. Employees liked the sessions and asked that he continue them. The Flake Offs have provided a way for employees from different parts of the organization to get to know one another, to learn that leadership within the facility is approachable and to discuss issues they feel are important. It has helped surface issues before they have become problems and it has helped people in the office to get to see each other in a new way. They also get to hear what is going in different parts of the office and to hear that others in the office may view situations differently. In many cases, people who attend actually stay beyond their quitting time so that they can continue the conversation.

Mike Olson, the Director, commented that the team had excellent direction from the former Assistant Director, Ron Rogala who helped the team work with data and develop an intervention. He stated that communication was an issue that needed to be focused on. The Flake Off provides a way for employees to raise issues and problems. He does tell them that while he may not be able to solve a problem, he will look into it. He also finds it interesting that it helps to have employees hear from others that what they may perceive as a problem may not be considered a problem by others.

DES MOINES REGIONAL OFFICE

Des Moines is a small site. The action team has three people. The team prepared the site for the survey and as a result the response rate was very high (92%). After receiving the results, the team analyzed data and found that interruptions at work were the biggest contributor to stress. The team decided to focus on the customer contact area where one clerk handled veterans coming into the office. This person not only had to contact other employees to handle veterans' requests but when this person was unavailable another office had to cover the desk. As a result of the team's recommendation another person was brought into the area. The team is using sick leave data and will use survey data to evaluate the intervention. It has had an impact on customer satisfaction.

FARGO VA MEDICAL CENTER AND REGIONAL OFFICE (VAMROC)*

Looking at data from the November 2000 survey and the performance measures of the facility, the Fargo Action Team chose an intervention that related to work climate including rude and disrespectful behavior. The facility is implementing the FISH philosophy in a transitional care unit where high employee turnover has been a problem.

The Fargo Action Team developed their business plan and is currently in the process of implementing the FISH philosophy on this unit. With orientation to FISH, the Fargo Action Team did a mini-survey of the Top Ten Behaviors identified in the November 2000 survey. The team asked for input on the employees' current work environment, since the original survey took place 18 months ago and the team felt September 11th might have changed some individuals' perspectives. The mini-survey's results showed that rude and disrespectful behavior is still a problem and identified who is responsible for this behavior. The team plan is to re-survey the long-term care unit group after the FISH philosophy is off the ground.

If this intervention proves to be successful here, the Fargo Action Team will pursue implementing it in other areas of VAMROC. The Fargo Action Team has also set up an in-service program, "Dealing with Difficult People," that the Mental Health Patient Service Line is presenting The team felt that this program was necessary since the mini-survey revealed that verbal abuse from patients, patient families and staff was increasing.

The Fargo Action Team was suspended, when AFGE Local 3884 withdrew from the project. AFGE believed that the Action Team was not being permitted to function as intended. During the enrollment process for the project, sites were told that both management and the union had to agree to participate. If at any point during the project, union or management wanted to withdraw, they could do so and project participation at that point would be suspended.

HOUSTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Houston National Cemetery is a small site. Its action Team consists of employees from the office and from the field. The team presented survey results to the employees at the site and then asked for their ideas and concerns. The team used the learning window to sort through their comments. Because of the site's history and because of the survey results the team decided to focus on finding a way to improve communications and to identify issues concerning employees before they became formal complaints or problems. Employees were told that they could bring their concerns to members of the action team.

The team also designated one of its members to serve as a rover. The rover goes through the site stopping to informally talk to employees to find out what is on their minds and to bring issues to the team. In addition, the action team has started to ask two employees to sit in on their meetings. The team hopes the employees will gain confidence in the team as they see how we function and that the team is there for them. The team tries to have meetings once a month.

Jorge Lopez, the Director of the Houston National Cemetery, discussed the project. He reviewed the history of the project and of the cemetery. He commented that when he came to the cemetery, it had just had to deal with the results of an investigation. After his arrival, for a variety of reasons, the site was hit with a number of EEO complaints and grievances. When his site was selected by NCA he was not initially happy; however, while he was initially skeptical, he stated that the project has helped to reduce the number of complaints and grievances to zero. The Union's involvement in the project and the Action team's interventions have helped to make this happen.

He admitted that when the teams started he decided to place two employees on the team who had filed complaints. He has seen how the project has affected them positively, which has helped the site.

MILWAUKEE REGIONAL OFFICE

The Action Team analyzed data and began presenting results to employees. The presentations were interrupted as the site began focusing on a major hiring initiative. As the team began to refocus on the presentation, VBA selected Milwaukee as a site of one of the Pension Centers and then as a pilot site for its Claims Processing initiative. Hiring increased significantly and the Regional Office's staff doubled in size. The team began to meet again and while they felt the change at the site made them question the original survey's validity, they identified an initiative: starting a newsletter to help improve communications.

Complicating the issues at the site were the poor working conditions at the building. The building was not only old, but also the staff was crowded and various divisions of the office were spread across the wings of the building. This

made recommendations even more difficult. By starting a newsletter with people drawn from across the facility as a team working on the newsletter, the Action Team hopes to start bringing the office back together.

The team also commented that the learning practices, especially the learning window had an impact on individual team members, a few of whom were recently promoted to supervisor positions and who were using them in their new work situations.

MINNEAPOLIS VA MEDICAL CENTER

Six months ago, the team added new team members. It has completed ten presentations and continues to schedule others. In addition the team has presented to leadership and other groups of supervisors.

The Action Team has decided to focus on retention and chose this based on business case - the need to save money. According to the American Management Association, the cost to replace an employee is 30% of his/her annual salary. For those with high demand skills, the cost can be 150% of the annual salary. In addition to the tangible impact there are intangibles that turnover affects - the loss of known relationships; Gap in historical perspective; reduction of loyalty; lost personal relationships; and frustration and frenzy. The team conservatively estimated that in FY 2001, turnover resulted in a loss of $10,449,000. If physicians were included, the estimated loss would be $16,254,000.

The Action Team has chosen to celebrate accomplishments in various work areas/services. "Take It To The MAT" (MAT = Minneapolis Action Team) was created to promote this philosophy. A Story Board will be posted to highlight the progress, accomplishments and plans.

PHOENIX REGIONAL OFFICE

VBA Phoenix is implementing an intervention to improve communication between selecting officials and employees.

When the team got data back from the stress and aggression survey, they looked at the top 12 responses that got a high score. Two common themes emerged. One was lack of positive or valid feedback and the other was negative interpersonal interaction. The team decided to work on feedback as it relates to the letter that Human Resources sends to internal applicants who are not selected for position for which they had applied.

The team proposed to revise the non-selection letter to include the employee's right to information on why they were not selected and what they can do to improve their chances next time around. The letter also includes the procedure to

go about obtaining the information. The team thought this intervention had merit because management has an obligation to provide insight and explanation to employees on what they need to do to improve their chances for job selection. The Action Team also thought this intervention had merit based on projected payoff. In addition, the team chose this item to address, because Phoenix's survey response was so different from the other stations. Before implementing the intervention, the team briefed station management and selecting officials gave them an opportunity for feedback and comment.

ST. CLOUD MEDICAL CENTER

The Action Team initially shared the survey results with Medical Center Leadership and employees at Critical Medical Center Issues days. The team also received input from employees. After studying the survey results, the team identified potential interventions and presented a plan to Leadership and Quality Leadership Council, which endorsed and supported the plan and provided a Commitment for funding

Using a 10-question survey, the team identified the target audience for the intervention (50-2 MEDEC; Primary Care-Outpatient clinic; Mental Health- MHP; 50-1; NHCU Extended Care.) Leadership has endorsed FISH. Those involved have received training. The team is doing a bi-monthly follow-up. In addition, the action team is doing monthly news, and is conducting quarterly one- hour refresher training. The Action Team will repeat the staff survey in 6 months

The following are the intervention's expected results:

- The reduction of sick leave usage in Building 50-2
- The improvement in stress and aggression scores for Building 50 staff from local survey.
- An increase in job satisfaction from the staff

SIOUX FALLS VA MEDICAL AND REGIONAL OFFICE CENTER (VAMROC)

The Sioux Falls Medical and Regional Office Center Workplace Stress and Aggression Action Team explained the process and outcome of its business case for action. The initial charter asked the teams to promote and facilitate the survey, analyze and inform employees of data, help to identify stressors and offer possible solutions. The Action Team has completed the process up to this point through over 40 team meetings, employee presentations, and conferences with union and management, coordination with other facility committees and hours of listening to employees. What the team learned is that the Sioux Falls VA employees feel strongly that they provide excellent quality of service, exhibit ownership of their jobs, and believe they work in a safe environment. Just as strongly, they expressed need for increased respect, praise, information,

rewarding performance, empowerment and risk taking without fear.

The survey results are the basis for the business action plan and the proposed four interventions. The action team presented the action plan to union and management on January 22, 2002.The team received concurrence, but union and management requested that they present the plan to the QRC (Quality Resource Council) for final approval. The team made a presentation to the QRC on March 6, 2002 and received the QRC's approval. On June 4,2002, the team met with selected employees to assign tasks and timelines to carry out the interventions.

The four interventions are:

- Reducing stress and tension.
- Increase communication.
- Supervisor training and
- Incentive Award Program.

Each intervention has the following headings: define problem, specify interventions, list specific recommendations, advantages and disadvantages, expected outcomes and performance measures. In addition, Sioux Falls issued an informational newsletter. The Action Team also sponsored one event to bring fun in the workplace that was designed to improve interactions and reduce stress; the team plans to hold such events quarterly.

In summary, the Sioux Falls Action Team chose the interventions based upon the formal data. However, the prevailing theme is an intangible one of creating and keeping an atmosphere of mutual respect, open communication and shared vision and mindset.

ST. PAUL REGIONAL OFFICE

When the team made a presentation to the Director, he asked the team to drill down into data more. The Action Team looked at such things as differences between men and women and supervisors and non-supervisors. At the time, the site had just become a Regional Loan Center, and the Action Team wanted to get a better picture of the entire facility. Communications and workload were the biggest problems.

Within the past year, St. Paul became a Pension Center, which has increased its staffing from 234 to about 280. While the Action Team has not implemented any interventions, because it wanted new survey data, it has just received the 2001 VA employee satisfaction survey data. The team struggled with the initial survey, and also lost half of their team members. With the help of the Acting Director, they replaced the team members and moved forward.

APPENDIX F – PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

PRESENTATIONS

FORTHCOMING

Keashly, Loraleigh. "The Nature and Effects of Workplace Bullying on Individuals and Organizations." To be presented as part of a symposium on "Understanding Workplace Bullying." Industrial Relations Research Association, Washington, DC, January 2003.

Neuman, Joel. The Social Conditions that Promote Bullying and Aggression in the Workplace (Forthcoming January 2003). To be presented as part of a symposium on "Understanding Workplace Bullying." Industrial Relations Research Association. Washington, DC, January 2003.

Symposium: Research-Practice Bridge under Construction: The VA Workplace Stress and Aggression Project." To be presented at the American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003. (Loraleigh Keashly, Chair).

> Scaringi, James, Robert A. Petzel M.D., and Rita Kowalski. "The Project's Genesis: The Need for a Research-Practice Bridge" Paper to be presented at American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003.

> Neuman, Joel, Loraleigh Keashly, and Joel Harmon. "Solid Bridge Foundations I: Role of Quantitative Data in the Process" American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003.

> Yorks, Lyle, Janet Reid-Hector, Joel Harmon, and Rita Kowalski "Solid Bridge Foundation II: Role of Qualitative Data in the Process" American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003.

> Kowalski, Rita, Daniel Kowalski, and Joel Harmon, "Applications: Does the Bridge Connect to our World?" American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003.

Petzel, Robert A., Daniel Kowalski and James Scaringi, "Sustaining the Bridge from Research to Practice" American Psychological Association (APA)/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Work, Stress and Health Conference. Toronto, Canada. March 2003.

2002

Yorks, Lyle, Janet Reid-Hector, Rita Kowalski, and Daniel Kowalski. "Collaborative Action Inquiry: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. " (Forthcoming November 2002). Presented at The Workplace Learning Institute-Inquiry and Organizational Development. Sponsored by The Center for Education Outreach & Innovation. Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Kowalski, Daniel, Rita Kowalski, and Joel Harmon. "Creating Qua^{nt}itative Data." A germination presented at "Research Greenhouse III: The Third Conference on Collaborative Research for Organizational Learning, Knowledge Creation, Capacity Building and Change," sponsored by The Society for Organizational Learning (SoL) and George Washington University Executive Leadership Doctoral Program and Center for the Study of Learning, Ashburn, Virginia. October 27-29,2002.

Scaringi, James, Anthony, McCray, Jennifer Long, and Renee Call. "Hard Facts about the Soft Stuff: Stress and Aggression in the Workplace." Presentation at the National Federal Workers Compensation Conference, Houston, TX. August 19-20, 2002.

Symposium: How Do We Know What We Think We Know? The Epistemic Challenges of Building an Academic-Practitioner Network in Support of Organizational Change. Academy Of Management, Denver, CO, August 11-14, 2002.

Keashly, Loraleigh, Daniel Kowalski, Rita. Kowalski, James Scaringi, Robert Petzel, and Joel Neuman, "Epistemological Challenges Experienced in the VA Project Academic-Practitioner Network: Implications for Creating Actionable Knowledge." Presented at Academy Of Management, Denver, CO, August 11-14, 2002.

Yorks, Lyle, Joel Harmon, Daniel Twomey, Loraleigh Keashly, "Framing the Epistemological Challenges of Building an Academic-Practitioner Network in Support of Organizational Change Through Collaborative Action Inquiry in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs." Presented at Academy Of Management, Denver, August 11-14, 2002.

Keashly, Loraleigh and Joel Neuman. "Exploring persistent patterns of workplace aggression. Part of a symposium entitled "Workplace abuse,

aggression, bullying, and incivility: Conceptual and Empirical Insights." Presented at Academy of Management, Denver, CO., August 11-14, 2002.

Scaringi, James, Joel Neuman, Odessa Johnson, Rita Kowalski and Anthony McCray, "Hard Facts about the Soft Stuff: The Business Case for Taking Action on Stress and Aggression and How It Will Improve the Quality of Life in VA" VA's Leadership Conference. Atlanta, GA, July 17, 2002.

Harmon, Joel, Daniel Twomey, Lyle Yorks, Scott. Behson, Joel Neuman, Loraleigh Keashly, Dan Kowalski, Rita Kowalski, James. Scaringi, Victoria. Marsick. (May 2002). "Toward Enlightening the Organization Using Collaborative Action Inquiry: An Academic-Practitioner Action-Science Experiment To Reduce Workplace Stress/Aggression In The U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs." Proceedings of the Eastern Academy of Management. New Haven, CT: Eastern Academy of Management.

2001

Kowalski, Rita. "Creating a Better Place to Work." HR on the Horizon: 2001 Conference, sponsored by the International Personnel Management Association (Federal Section) and the American Society for Public Administration (Section on Personnel Administration and Labor Relations), Bethesda, Maryland, February 21, 2001.

Kowalski, Rita. "Teams, Stress and Innovation at VA." Presentation at The Brookings Institute Executive Education Seminar: Emerging Issues in Public Management, Washington, DC, March 8, 2001.

Symposium: Working Along The Practice-Grounded Research Continuum: A Collaborative Academic-Practitioner Action-Science Experiment In The U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs. National Academy Of Management, Washington DC, August 2001.

> Harmon, Joel, Scott Behson, Joel. Neuman, and Loraleigh. Keashly. "Quantitatively Mapping the Organization Causes and Performance Effects of Workplace Stress and Aggression in the US Department of Veterans Affairs." Presented at the Academy of Management Annual Conference, Washington, DC, August 6-8, 2001.

> *Twomey, Daniel, Lyle Yorks and Joel Harmon. "Enhancing Organization Learning and Change through Data-Driven Collaborative Action Inquiry." Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Conference, Washington, DC, August 6-8, 2001.*

Yorks, Lyle. Victoria. Marsick, Daniel Kowalski, Rita Kowalski and James Scaringi. "Qualitatively Assessing the Impact of Collaborative Action Inquiry on Organizational Learning and Change in the US Department of Veterans Affairs." Presented at the Academy of Management Annual Conference, Washington, DC, August 6-8, 2001.

Scaringi, James, Daniel Kowalski, Anthony McCray and Loraleigh. Keashly. "Creating a Better Place to Work." Presentation at the National Federal Workers Compensation Conference, Chicago, August 22-24, 2001.

Twomey, Daniel, Joel Harmon, Lyle Yorks, Robert Petzel, James Scaringi, Rita Kowalski and Daniel Kowalski. "Enhancing Organizational Learning and Change in the VA through Data-Driven Collaborative Action Inquiry." Presented at Greenhouse 2 sponsored by the Society for Organizational Learning, Hartford, CT, September 20-21, 2001

2000

"Symposium: A Time for Experimentation and Inquiry into Ourselves? A Collaborative Academic-Practitioner Action Science Experiment in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to Reduce Workplace Stress and Aggression." National Academy of Management, Toronto, August 2000

Petzel, Robert .A. Joel Neuman, J., Loraleigh Keashly, and Joel Harmon, "Reducing Workplace Stress and Aggression to Enhance Individual and Organizational Performance." Presentation at Enhancing Working Conditions and Patient Safety: Best Practices Conference sponsored by the Agency For Health Care Research and Quality, Pittsburgh, October, 2000.

PUBLICATIONS

Harmon, Joel, Daniel Twomey, Lyle Yorks, Scott. Behson, Joel Neuman, Loraleigh Keashly, Dan Kowalski, Rita Kowalski, James. Scaringi, Victoria. Marsick. (May 2002). "Toward Enlightening the Organization Using Collaborative Action Inquiry: An Academic-Practitioner Action-Science Experiment To Reduce Workplace Stress/Aggression In The U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs." Proceedings of the Eastern Academy of Management. New Haven, CT: Eastern Academy of Management.

Kowalski, Rita. "Who's on First? – A Case Study on Low Level Aggression" Public Performance & Management Review. September 2001. (pp. 122-128).

Stress and Aggression in the Workplace Project (June 2002). Learning Practices: A Guide for Action Teams.

Stress and Aggression in the Workplace Project (October 2002). Inquiry and Data: A Guide for Action Teams.

APPENDIX G – QUESTIONS THE PROJECT HAS GENERATED

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUESTIONS

To learn new things and to create new knowledge, somehow you have to discover what you don't know you don't know. How do you become aware of gaps in your knowledge? Questions help. The inquiry process, which the project uses, relies upon asking questions to test assumptions and to identify new areas for explorations. Questions also help individuals develop a better understanding and appreciation of the views of others and, can help to resolve misunderstanding and miscommunication.

The following is a list of the questions found in the report. These questions are just as important as some of the results that the report contains. The questions have helped the project adapt to its environment and adjust to meet new issues and concerns.

Questions

STRESS AND AGGRESSION

- What is different about the interface between "customers" and VHA employees that causes VHA employees to report more aggression from customers than do VBA or NCA employees?

- Why do supervisors engage in more passive aggressive behaviors than co-workers or employees?

- Why do employees feel more stress if they perceive that their supervisors are their chief source of aggression?

- Why don't employees file formal complaints or grievances for aggressive acts that persist over time?

- Since VA has had sexual harassment and diversity training, what does it mean that in the survey employees reported these behaviors?

- Why are employees reporting these behaviors even though VA has a formal complaint procedure?

- Would the existence of these behaviors in the workplace create a hostile work environment?

- Is there a relationship at the project sites between disciplinary/adverse actions taken and the evidence of aggression from the survey and from the violence-related incidents reports?

STRESS AND AGGRESSION

- What impact does bullying by supervisors have on satisfaction with the job and with the organization?

- Does the impact of bullying on stress and intention to leave the organizations depend upon who does the bullying?

- If higher levels of aggression adversely affect retention what interventions can VA take to retain employees?

- How can supervisors deal with perceptions of employees as they work to create a workplace that will attract and keep employees?

- Does being sensitized to low-level aggression help to reduce it? That is, when people are made aware of subtler, passive, covert forms of aggression does this awareness lead to the reduction of such behavior? Does it produce an increasing in the reporting of such incidents?

- Are the younger age groups more likely to quit because of the fact that they have a more portable retirement system?

- Are the younger age groups responding to their experience with a "command and control" management and viewing this style of management as bullying?

- Are there greater numbers of women and minorities in the younger age groups? And if so, do they affect the younger age groups' perceptions of aggressive behaviors and their intention to leave?

- Are the relationships we have identified causal?

- What is the precise nature of the relationships among aggression, stress, and performance?

- Will our interventions have a positive and long-lasting impact on interpersonal relations, group process, and organizational performance?

- Since current leadership programs within VA provide for the development of interpersonal skills, why are the respondents reporting bullying behaviors on the part of supervisors?

- Should current leadership programs within VA incorporate positive behavioral models and development that will recognize the difference between an assertive leadership and an aggressive leadership?

Questions

STRESS AND AGGRESSION

- Do current leadership programs within VA incorporate positive behavioral models and development that will recognize the difference between and assertive leader and an aggressive leader? Which patterns of behavior do these programs value more? Assertive leadership or aggressive leadership?

- What is the relationship between gender and these aggressive behaviors?

THE SURVEY, EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND BUSINESS RESULTS

- Will the data from the 2001 and 2002 surveys validate the statistical models?

- Will the interventions reduce stress and aggression, improve employee satisfaction and improve business results?

- When people are answering the workload factors are they thinking about such things as dwindling resources and being short-staffed?

- When employees are talking about needing to do more with less are they thinking about how much leadership and their supervisors encourage them to find new ways of doing things?

- When people experience leadership changes and transitions and have new people to whom they report, is that affecting the way they respond to questions about trust and their feelings about being supported?

- Are the changes they are experiencing, confusing them about how their jobs link to the goals of the organization?

- Are their responses to questions about fairness and respect an indication about how they feel they are being treated?

- Are the stress questions a way to discover the stress levels employees are experiencing on the job?

Questions

INTERVENTIONS

- Are the interventions tied to business results?

- Why do the teams appear to place more value on quantitative results than upon qualitative results? What can be done to encourage the use of qualitative and quantitative results in the evaluation process?

QUESTIONING AND LEARNING

- Why did the Action Teams adopt certain learning practices more than others?

ACTION INQUIRY, LEARNING, AND THE PROCESS

- How can action inquiry promote a learning culture within VA?

- What factors within VA facilitate and inhibit learning at the individual, team and organizational levels?

- What processes facilitate transfer of learning across organizational boundaries (from one site to another, one team to another)?

- To what extent does stress and aggression affect learning?

- What impact does the tension between university-based (academics) and the organization-based researchers (practitioners) have upon the nature of the partnership? (E.g., the tendency of academics to prefer careful analysis vs. the practitioners pre-disposition to act quickly?

- To what extent have the actions of the Project Team reflected the organizational cultures? For example, has this impacted the way the Project Team recommended constituting the Action Teams?

- In what ways do the Project Team members enact new ways of acting different from the individual member's organizations?

- How does the organization use (or not use) the experience of the project for learning?

STAKEHOLDER/RESOURCE PROVIDERS/BENEFACTORS/SPONSORS

VA Office of Occupational Safety and Health

VA Office of Resolution Management

VA Learning University

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) - VISN 23

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) – Eastern Area (former SDN 6 facilities) and Phoenix Regional Office

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

National Science Foundation

Columbia University, Teachers College

Fairleigh Dickinson University

State University of New York at New Paltz

Wayne State University

For more information about the Stress and Aggression in the Workplace Project visit our Websites:

Internet: http://www.va.gov/valu
VA Intranet: http://vaww.va.gov/valu